

The Carriage Stone

December 2006

New Hempstead Presbyterian Church, New City, N.Y.

Newsletter of the English Church

Merry Christmas!

Advent and Christmas worship schedule inside

Christmas mission opportunities,
Thanksgiving mission report



Wise Men and Women Still Seek Him



“The Carriage Stone” is the Newsletter of

The New Hempstead Presbyterian Church

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A Letter from God

My Newsletter column this month is courtesy of Sue Rentz. This e-mail from her was too good not to pass on to everyone.

Advent and Christmas
Blessings,



A letter from God to His children:

Dear children,

It has come to my attention that many of you are upset that folks are taking My name out of the season. Maybe you've forgotten that I wasn't actually born during this time of the year and that it was some of your predecessors who decided to celebrate My birthday on what was actually a time of pagan festival. Although I do appreciate being remembered anytime.

How I personally feel about this celebration can probably be most easily understood by those of you who have been blessed with children of your own. I don't care what you call the day. If you want to celebrate My birth just, **get along and love one another!**

Now, having said that let Me go on.

If it bothers you that the town in which you live doesn't allow a scene depicting My birth, then just get rid of a couple of Santas and snowmen and put in a small Nativity scene on your own front lawn. If all My followers did that, there wouldn't be any need for such



a scene on the town square because there would be many of them all around town.

Stop worrying about the fact that people are calling the tree a holiday tree, instead of a Christmas tree. I made all trees. You can and may remember Me anytime you see any tree.

Decorate a grape vine if you wish: I actually spoke of that one in a teaching explaining who I am in relation to you and what each of our tasks were. If you have forgot that one, look up John 15: 1-8.

If you want to give Me a present in remembrance of My birth, here is my wish list. Choose something from it:

1. Instead of writing protest letters objecting to the way My birthday is being celebrated, write letters of love and hope to soldiers away from home. They are terribly afraid and lonely this time of year. I know, they tell Me all the time.
2. Visit someone in a nursing home. You don't have to know them personally. They just need to know that someone cares about them.
3. Instead of writing to George complaining about the wording on the cards his staff sent out this year, why don't you write and tell him that you'll be praying for him and his family this year. Then follow up. It will be nice hearing from you again.
4. Instead of giving your children a lot of gifts you can't afford and they don't need, spend time with them. Tell

Letter from God



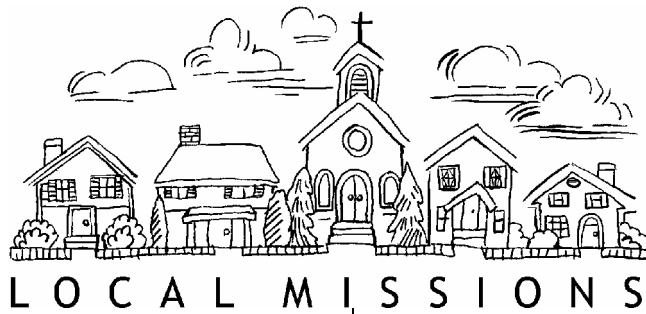
them the story of My birth, and why I came to live with you down here. Hold them in your arms and remind them that I love them.

5. Pick someone that has hurt you in the past and forgive him or her.
6. Did you know that someone in your town will attempt to take their own life this season because they feel so alone and hopeless? Since you don't know who that person is, try giving everyone you meet a warm smile. It could make the difference. In addition, you might consider supporting the local Hot Line: they talk with people like that every day.
7. Instead of nit picking about what the retailer in your town calls the holiday, be patient with the people who work there. Give them a warm smile and a kind word. Even if they are not allowed to wish you a "Merry Christmas" that doesn't keep you from wishing them one. Then stop shopping there on Sunday. If the store didn't make so much money on that day, they'd close and let their employees spend the day at home with their families.

8. If you really want to make a difference, support a missionary, especially one who takes My love and Good News to those who have never heard My name. You may already know someone like that.
9. Here's a good one. There are individuals and whole families in your town who not only will have no "Christmas" tree, but neither will they have any presents to give or receive. If you don't know them (and I suspect you don't) buy some food or a few gifts and give them to the Marines, the Salvation Army or some other charity that believes in Me and they will make the delivery for you.
10. Finally, if you want to make a statement about your belief in and loyalty to Me, then behave like a Christian. Don't do things in secret that you wouldn't do in My presence. Let people know by your actions that you are one of mine.

P.S. Don't forget; I am God and can take care of Myself. Just love Me and do what I have told you to do. I'll take care of all the rest. Check out the list above and get to work; time is short. I'll help you, but the ball is now in your court. Do have a most blessed Christmas with all those whom you love. And remember, **I love you!**

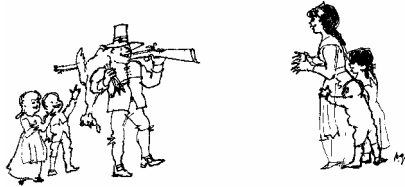




Thanksgiving Baskets

From Carmen Bermudez

The Thanksgiving basket event went off with flying colors. We had lots of help and good fellowship. I want to thank all who stayed and helped after Sunday service. We packed 102 baskets, which were picked up from Murchison Hall on Monday morning, November 20. I want to thank Joe Bermudez, Percy Crockett, Jack Landers, Ed and Val Garcia for being there early to help send the baskets on their way. In addition, special thanks to Terry Lucas for tireless shopping.



Special thanks to Marc Bidon for being my right hand and left too. Thank God we only have twelve months before we have to do this again.

God Bless you all and I wish you all a wonderful Thanksgiving.



Greeting Card Update

From Wendy Keryk

The response to the greeting cards has been overwhelming. The note cards are all sold out at this point. We do have a few Christmas cards left; see a Deacon if you are interested.

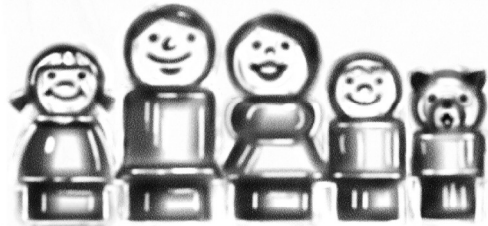
Thank you everyone for supporting this effort.

Letters from Santa

From Marian Maroney

Christmas is especially significant when we can share in the joy it brings to children. Again this year, the Deacons have adopted families through People to People, and we will try to fulfill as many wishes of the children in those families as possible.

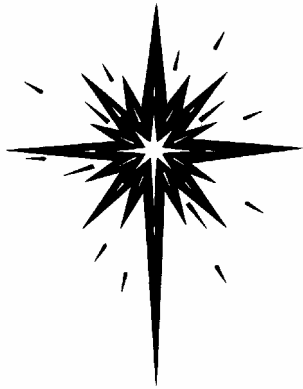
If you are able, please help us purchase new toys and clothing that the children have asked for in their letters to Santa. We will try to make it possible for each child to receive the toy of their wish, along with a warm sweater, pair of pants and a pair of shoes! How wonderful to know that we are making it possible for needy families to give their children something special for the holidays.



Adopt-a-Family

A sign up sheet is available in the Colonial Room with details about what each child's special wish from Santa is and his or her clothing size. The deadline for us to deliver the gifts to People-to-People is Sunday, December 10.

If you would prefer to make a donation toward the purchase of a Christmas gift for one of the children, please let one of the Deacons know. Thank you for your help and for helping us bring the magic of Christmas to children in need.



Christmas Joy Offering

Christmas Joy Offering

From Janine Kallé

Presbyterians have long celebrated the birth of Jesus Christ by giving generously to an Advent offering. The Christmas Joy Offering dates back to the 1930s when the former Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS) began an offering to

supplement inadequate retirement income and provide supplemental medical insurance for former ministers, missionaries, church workers, and their families. In the late 1940s that became the Joy Gift.

In the former United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (UPCUSA), a Christmas offering was first taken in 1960. Called the White Gift, its funds were used for general mission and world relief. In 1973, the offering was used to assist former servants of the church who were living on inadequate pensions.

In 1974 minority education was added, and in 1979 nursing home care assistance was included. Funds were distributed evenly between the Board of Pensions and minority education.

In 1988, the PCUS and the UPCUSA offerings were joined into one offering, the Christmas Offering Joy Gift. The General Assembly set a goal that neither the Board of Pensions nor the racial ethnic schools would suffer in the merger of the Joy Gift and the Christmas Offering. It was several years before the General Assembly decided that the fairest way to achieve their goal was to divide the offering evenly.

In 1989 the offering was renamed the Christmas Joy Offering, and in 1991 the General Assembly changed the distribution of funds to 50 percent

to the Board of Pensions and 50 percent to the Presbyterian racial ethnic schools and colleges.

Through the Board of Pensions' Financial Assistance Programs, the Christmas Joy Offering recognizes the faithfulness of current and retired church workers by providing funds to help them through difficult times.

To help retired church workers and their surviving spouses, the board offers *Income Supplements* to raise incomes to a level where retirees can live modestly and continue to maintain their independence. If these individuals' income does not support their housing needs, the board provides *Housing Supplements*.

The *Shared Grant Program* is open to all current and retired church workers. Governing bodies, congregations and employing organizations offer the grants to church workers who have financial need or an emergency. The board shares the funding equally with this partner organization.

Many times, *Shared Grants* and *Emergency Assistance Grants* meet needs that might be considered routine, such as additional medical or dental expenses not covered by insurance. Perhaps a retiree needs a little help paying for equipment or services not covered by traditional insurance. Other times, grants may help a church worker meet unexpected financial needs or recover from a natural disaster.

Each of these grants is an expression of Presbyterians' faithful witness to and sharing of the love of Christ for all people. *Shared* and *Emergency Assistance Grants* help people with financial needs resulting from a variety of problems: an unemployed spouse, a flood or tornado, a seriously ill child, or unexpected family expenses. Often, recipients of grants large and small say that as important as the financial assistance was, what really sustained them was the knowledge that the church was standing with them in their time of need.

Please prayerfully consider giving generously to this offering.

When Christmas isn't Merry

From Pastor Lori

Christmas can be a difficult time of year for people. "It's the most wonderful time of the year," as the carol goes, just isn't true for everyone. Being "down" during these dark winter months does not make you a Scrooge!

If you or someone you know tends to get a bit depressed at Christmastime, you're not alone. Come to a "Blue Christmas" worship service at New Hempstead Presbyterian Church Thursday night, December 14, at 7:30. We will have a time of music, prayers, candle lighting, scripture reading, and silence to allow us to come before God with all of those feelings that our society tries to get us to deny during the holidays—frustration, disappointment, anger, and the plain ol' blues. It's a time to remember that God came into the world as a human child in order that God could share *all* of our feelings intimately, not just the happy ones.

Even (especially!) if Christmas is your favorite time of year, come and spend some "quiet time" with us in the middle of all the hectic business that the season can bring.

Pause in the middle of some of those less spiritual events, like the office Christmas party, and bring your spirit into God's presence as the Church awaits the coming of Jesus Christ at Christmas.

Christmas Pageant

From Barbara Zacheis



This year's Christmas Pageant will take place during the church service on December 17. Rehearsals will be Saturdays, December 9 and 16 from 9:30 until noon. Those who would like to participate in the Pageant (adults included!) should plan to be at both rehearsals. This year's pageant is being directed by Vanessa Greenwald, so be sure to contact her to let her know you would like to participate.

Calendar of Events for Advent and Christmas

Sunday, December 3 , First Sunday of Advent	Worship service at 11 AM with Communion
Sunday, December 10 , Second Sunday of Advent	Worship Service at 11 AM with dedication of the prayer cards
Thursday, December 14	At 7:30 PM, the Rev. Dr. Lori Knight-Whitehouse will lead a Blue Christmas worship service.
Sunday, December 17 , Third Sunday of Advent	Worship Service at 11 AM with Christmas Pageant
Sunday, December 24 , Fourth Sunday of Advent	Worship service at 11 AM
Sunday, December 24 , Christmas Eve	Candlelight Worship service at 8 PM with Communion
Sunday, December 31 , Sunday after Christmas	Worship service at 11 AM

Genocide in Darfur

From Joe Bermudez

Darfur is a region in the western part of the Sudan a country in northeast Africa. Since early in 2003 there has been a deadly conflict between two rebel groups in Darfur and the Sudanese government. The rebels have been fighting for underdevelopment issues and political treatment of Darfur. In return, the Sudanese government's regular armed forces and the Janjaweed, largely composed of fighters of Arab nomadic background, have targeted civilian populations and ethnic groups from which the rebels get most of their help.

Over 400,000 people have been killed and more than 2 million innocent civilians have been forced to leave their homes and now live in displaced refugee camps. 3.5 million men, women and children are completely dependent on international aid for survival. According to Savedarfur.org, the Sudanese government and the Janjaweed militias are responsible for the burning and destruction of hundreds of rural villages, the killing of tens of thousands of

people and rape and assault of thousands of women and girls. The tragedy continues on a daily basis with starvation being the number one killer.

You can get additional information by visiting one of the many online organizations such as:

Savedarfur.org

or

pcusa.org/pda/response/africa/sudandarfur



There will be no separate January issue of *The Carriage Stone* again this year. Instead, there will be a combined January/February

issue coming out later in January. The deadline for this combined issue is Sunday January 7. By adjusting our publishing schedule in this way, both Shirley and I are able to enjoy a less stressful Christmas season.

To order poinsettias, please return this form along with a check made payable to the New Hempstead Presbyterian Church (and marked Christmas flowers) to: 484 New Hempstead Road, New City NY 10956 by December 10.

Please purchase _____ (how many) poinsettias for me at \$15 each.

Name: _____

Phone: _____

I (we) would like the poinsettias to be dedicated as follows:

_____ To the Glory of God

_____ In Celebration of Christ's birth

_____ In memory of: _____

_____ Other: _____



Mississippi Mission Trip

From Sue Rentz

First, I would like to thank you all for supporting me on this trip. It was an honor and a privilege for me to represent you in this very important mission. I also want to thank you for allowing me to share my experiences with you in worship recently. I hope that I was able to give you some idea of what life is like for the people of Louisiana and Mississippi (one year after Hurricane Katrina). Time and my memory did not permit me to share other bits of information, so I thought I would use the newsletter to continue my talk.

1. We were told that, in New Orleans, most people with a spare bedroom were renting it out to someone displaced from his/her home.
2. Large rats are found dead or alive in the streets because the water drove them out of the ground. They then went to abandoned houses until demolition began, which then forced them onto the streets.
3. Apparently, the plan is to rebuild the levees higher and build dams for the canals.
4. Prior to Katrina, 596,000 people lived in New Orleans. Now, there are 180,000.
5. Rents for people returning have increased by at least 40%. In Slidell, LA, an apartment that previously rented for \$300 was raised to \$800–\$1,000.
6. Besides the watermarks on the houses, there are watermarks on people's souls.
7. People were in shock and became paralyzed and hopeless.
8. We were told often that some contractors agreed to do work for people, took their money, did a little work and then left with the money and the job undone. It is not hard to understand the despair and hopelessness of these people.

9. In Mississippi, the water came in so fast that it rose 1 ft. per minute.

Imagine that you are in your home. If it

takes 3 minutes to get you and your family to the door, you are already in 3 feet of water. In some places, the water was as high as 20–30 feet.

10. Since the storm, 5,000 volunteers have come through the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance program to help rebuild Mississippi.
11. Father Louis, of St. Vincent de Paul Catholic School, in Long Beach, Miss. said, "You don't find God in the hurricane; you find God in the aftermath."
12. A sign on a cross in front of a church said, "Jesus has risen and so have we."

Let us not forget to pray for the people who are still trying to rebuild their lives and for the people in mission who are trying to help them do just that.

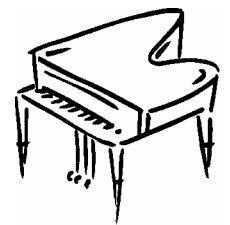


Beethoven's Birthday Bash

On Sunday, December 17, the Rockland Symphony Orchestra will celebrate Beethoven's 236th Birthday with a presentation of Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 3. Marilyn Copeland is the soloist; Dr. Marvin von Deck is conducting.

Rockland Symphony Orchestra concerts take place in the Cultural Arts Theatre at RCC in Suffern. For more information on this event, contact Barbara Hurley or visit

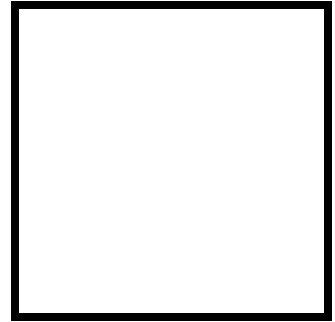
www.rocklandsymphony.org on the web.



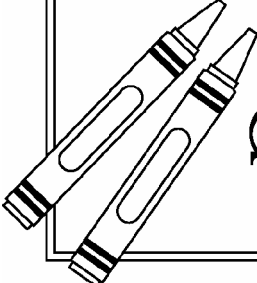


Newsletter of the English Church

New Hempstead Presbyterian Church
 484 New Hempstead Road
 New City NY 10956



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Just for KIDS

Peace on Earth

Do you remember what King Herod did when he heard about the birth of Jesus? He was so troubled that he issued a decree ordering the death of all male children younger than 2 years old. Jesus was not born in a time of peace, but we can look forward to His return and believe what the heavenly host proclaimed.

Follow the maze through the verse.



START

And suddenly there

was with the angel

a multitude of the

heavenly host praising God,

and saying, "Glory to God

in the highest, and on earth

peace, good will

toward men."

Luke 2:13-14, KJV **FINISH**