

The Carriage Stone

December 2010

New Hempstead Presbyterian Church, New City, NY.
The English Church



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"The Carriage Stone" is the Newsletter of

The New Hempstead Presbyterian Church

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Untangling the Tinsel*

Advent, then is dedicated to the last things, to death, judgment, heaven and hell, but above all to Jesus' glorious coming to complete his Easter work. The church goes so far as to set aside an entire liturgical season to the end of the world and the final coming of the Lord, so important a part of the faith does [the church] consider these truths.

—Charles K. Riepe

We don't often associate the season leading up to Christmas with God's judgment. Our children's judgment maybe; did we get them the right things from their Christmas list?

Our in-laws' judgment, perhaps; ("Why don't you use my stuffing recipe, dear? Yours was a bit dry this year.") But God's judgment? Not so much.

The Church traditionally kept Advent as a time of penitence, like Lent. Indeed, the Bible readings for the season often focus on repentance—this year we'll hear a lot of John the Baptist from Matthew's Gospel. "Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." (Matthew 3: 10) It's a far cry from jolly old Saint Nick, who makes his list and checks it twice. Perhaps some self-examination during this season could help us "untangle the tinsel"—not in a gloomy, sack-cloth-and-ashes way, but in a realistic, reason-for-the-season way.

In the weeks leading up to Christmas, we attune our hearts, minds and spirits to the coming incarnation of God—the creator of the Universe becomes a creature. A world that deserved the wrath of God instead got the love of God—God's very own self wrapped up in snug blankets and sleeping in a manger. It's not about whether or not you've been naughty or nice—it's sheer gift; pure grace.

It is right that during a season that has been coöpted by commercial concerns, Christians take it back from Madison Avenue and the internet by remembering that there is no such thing as "the perfect Christmas." We can let go of the idea that God in the form of Martha Stewart will be judging our Christmas tree and holiday table. God will judge us, and when we stand before God, God will want to know not how much we spent, but how much we loved; how much of ourselves we gave away. The Memorial Acclamation at the Eucharist reminds us:

Christ has died,
Christ is risen,
Christ will come again.

We all know THIS is the gift of Christmas: God's salvation in a newborn baby. Time spent in prayer and meditation on what this gift means in our lives is time spent preparing to celebrate this holy day. It is also time spent with the God who longs still to be received with all the joy that little children receive Christmas gifts; with the God who will come again at the end of time.

"Oh Come, Oh Come Emmanuel!" May your Advent and Christmas season be blessed with a deeper sense of the presence of Christ.

* Thanks to one of the dear friends of my childhood (and matron of honor at our wedding!) Kathy Walters Burnsed for this phrase.



Calendar of Events for Advent and Christmas

- Sunday, **November 28**, 11 AM
First Sunday of Advent
Worship service – Church decorating afterwards.
- Sunday, **December 5**, 11 AM
Second Sunday of Advent
Worship Service with Communion and dedication of the prayer cards.
- Wednesday, **December 8**, 8 PM
Blue Christmas Worship service (see below)
led by the Rev. Dr. Lori Knight-Whitehouse
- Sunday, **December 12**, 11 AM
Third Sunday of Advent
Worship Service with children participation
Poinsettia orders due (see page 6)
- Sunday, **December 19**, 11 AM
Fourth Sunday of Advent
Worship service
- Friday, **December 24**, 8 PM
Christmas Eve
Candlelight Worship service with Communion
- Sunday, **December 26**, 11 AM
Sunday after Christmas
Hymn Sing Worship service (see page 4)



Christmas can be a time of joyous preparation and excitement, but for some people Christmas brings painful memories of loved ones lost or troubled times. Some folks struggle to get through a season that others look forward to. If you or someone you know has a difficult time during this season, please consider joining us for the **Blue Christmas** service. There will be prayers and meditations that may help you to get through this season a little easier this year, as well as some meditative music and a focus on the true meaning of the Christmas season, without the hustle and bustle of traditional seasonal distractions. The service begins at 8 PM on Wednesday, December 8. We hope to see you there.





College Connections

From Laura Metallo-Bidon

It seems every day there is another troubling news story coming from college campuses: violence, bullying, suicide, drug and alcohol abuse...not to mention academic stresses and the

pressure of midterm and final exams.

In an effort to reach out to college students, the Mission/Outreach committee is collecting the campus addresses of NHPC members and friends who are currently in college. Our goal is to reach out to them – with a card or letter, perhaps a box of cookies—to let them know they are in our prayers, and that they always have a home at New Hempstead.

We hope to have this effort underway for final exams, coming up in December. Please contact Laura Metallo-Bidon with the name and campus address of a college student you'd like to reach out to. Whether they are away at school or studying locally, member or friend of NHPC, they can be part of our College Connections.



With your support, NHPC raised \$932 towards the peacemaking offering. Thanks to all for your contributions.



We will have our Traditional Hymn Sing service on Sunday, December 26 – choose your favorite hymns we may have missed during the Christmas Season and request them at this service! Now's your chance to sing that which “we haven't sung in a long time.”

From the Deacons

The Deacons of NHPC are pleased to participate in a most valuable program sponsored by the Home Aides of Rockland. You can bring joy and happiness into the lives of a senior through participating in the “Be a Gift Angel for a Senior” this Christmas season. The process is simple. Simply select and purchase a modest gift from a list. Return the gift unwrapped to the church by Sunday, December 5. Thus far, this worthy mission has been well received by the membership.



Thank you to all who have so generously given to the recent “Change in the Jar” project. The money collected for the Spring

From the Deacons

Valley Breakfast Program, in memory of Paul Emch, will be a welcome gift to this worthy and necessary community service. The Program welcomes volunteers, so if anyone is interested in making a valuable contribution to our neighbors, Pastor Lori will be happy to pass on the necessary information to you.

The Deacons would like to say thank you to Percy Crockett and Wendy Keryk for their invaluable service and dedication to the Board of Deacons over the last six years. Your talents and love will be greatly missed.

Financial Report

From Mark Zacheis, Treasurer

Ten months of the year have now gone by, which means that we can give a reasonable projection as to how the year will end up. On the revenue side, the pledge giving is right on track. Third quarter pledge statements went out in mid-October and I can report that most showed that people either are caught up with their giving or maybe even have given a little more. If all things go well in November and December, we should be able to hit the budget of \$95,000.

The other major source of revenue for us is donations from those who use Murchison Hall. The day care has been working all year to get their state and local licenses in order, and managed to open in October. They are currently finding it a challenge to attract clients, so have not been able to provide much of a donation to the church. As a result, we will likely come in under budget in this area by about \$10,000. The total expected revenues for the year are projected to reach \$150,000 against a budget of \$160,000.

On the expense side, we are being very careful not to spend any more than necessary, and look on track to end up hitting the budget of \$160,000. That means a loss on the year of \$10,000.

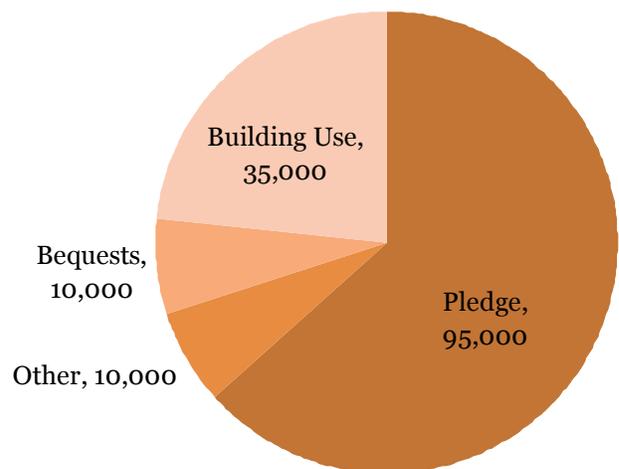
At the time of this writing, we are in the middle of the Stewardship Campaign for 2011. We see that people are pledging and giving the best that they can, and in the present economic environment, it's difficult to ask for more. We are asking for more however, in terms of an increase of 5% over last year's pledge, with the understanding that this is not possible for all people. So we ran a series of three Minutes for Mission, leading up to Pledge Dedication Sunday on November 21. The Stewardship committee will be reviewing the pledge cards and we will be contacting folks who do not submit a card, asking them to make a commitment this year.

And we especially want to thank those who have made a commitment.

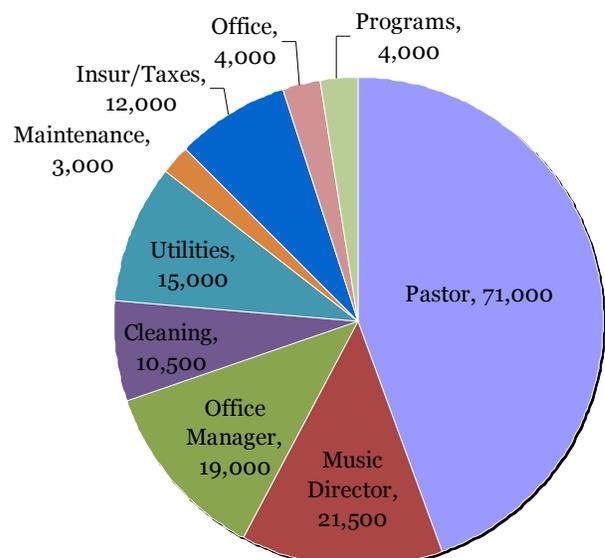
After the pledge cards come in and we have an understanding of what member giving will look like in the coming year, as well of a better understanding of the viability of the day care center, we'll come up with a budget for Session to approve. That budget will be put in the annual report and discussed with the congregation at the annual meeting.

In the meantime, thank you all for your concern over the church's finances and especially for your generosity, both this year and next year.

2010 Revenues



2010 Expenses





Benefits of Choir Practice

From Kryste Andrews

The dedicated members of our volunteer choir work very hard each week to prepare music for the Sunday service.

We have a lot of fun, too.

Participating is not only a social activity but is enhancing the singers' health, as well. The following is taken from an article focused on the television show Glee. It appeared in the publication Geico Now.

"Learning music sharpens the mind."

"Rehearsing it increases physical stamina."

"Performing with others requires a mindfulness that nourishes the spirit."

Come join us on Thursday nights and become healthier and more spirit-filled!

Christmas Joy Offering

In this season when we celebrate the child born in Bethlehem, we also realize that the birth of Jesus ushered in a new realm of God's love at work in the world. This love causes us to recognize the image of God imbedded in all humankind. It compels us to reach out with charity, justice and grace. We seek to honor every child of God. This, too, is how we celebrate the child born on that first Christmas day.



Presbyterians can respond to that love at Christmas by giving generously to the Christmas Joy Offering. The Offering helps students at racial ethnic schools and colleges develop their gifts and find their calling to serve God through serving their community. At the same time, the Offering helps families of both active and retired church workers to meet unexpected needs. As we celebrate Jesus' love in our lives this Christmas, our gifts bear joyful witness to the power of that boundless love that changes lives.



Poinsettias

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 12.

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: _____