

# The Carriage Stone

February 2013

New Hempstead Presbyterian Church, New City, N.Y.  
*The English Church*



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"The Carriage Stone" is the Newsletter of  
**The New Hempstead Presbyterian Church**

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## Magus 1990

Epiphany Blessings to everyone, and Happy New Year. I found this poem on my friend and colleague Rev. Jeffrey Geary of White Plains Presbyterian Church. He was a student and friend of the poet, Dr. Clifford Swartz, a professor of Physics at Stony Brook University. The poem is a beautiful riff on the story of the Wise Ones. Enjoy.

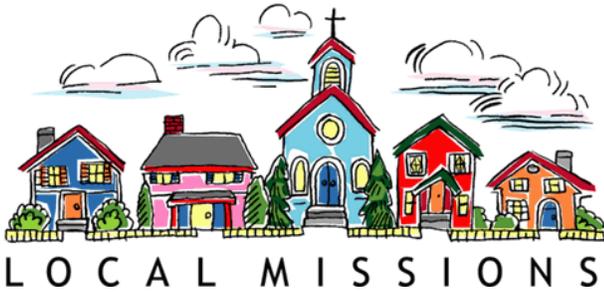
### Magus 1990, Clifford E. Swartz

I almost didn't go this year.  
It always comes at the wrong time,  
With the students still here,  
And one conference after another.  
If it hadn't been for Balthazar,  
I would have stayed home.  
But he's getting on in years,  
And I hate to disappoint him.  
"It's tradition," he said.  
"They expect us, you know,  
And if we didn't come,  
It wouldn't be the same."  
Of course it's not like it used to be  
Before the TV and the planes.  
I remember when Eliot led the tour,  
With his refractory camels,  
And conditions, as he might say,  
Satisfactory. No, now we can  
Pack up and be there the same day.  
We stay at the Bethlehem Hilton,  
Some distance from the stable,  
As you can imagine,  
But within easy reach by car.  
Who go through this annual ritual?



The angel choirs still need rehearsing,  
And the shepherds seem to lose their zest,  
Though they were always out of character,  
Trying too hard to be bucolic.  
As usual, Joseph seems bewildered  
In a role that was never clear.  
It's Mary that I come to see,  
Exhausted, shy, and yet triumphant.  
The creator, in human form.  
Out of love she had begotten  
Intelligence and comprehension,  
Hunger and satisfaction,  
Hatred and pity.  
All the human passions, successes and  
failures.  
Her love cries and she feeds it.  
It was an ordinary birth,  
Which we celebrate in honor  
Of all new births, all new creations,  
All new chances to begin again.  
Once I saw a star explode  
Where none had been before.  
It was an old star, dying, and in its death  
Gave life to planets yet unborn.  
In our line of work, we live in mystery,  
Hoping for revelation.  
So I will go again to Bethlehem,  
And kneel and celebrate  
With shepherds and with kings.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lori" with a flourish underneath.



## Helping Our Neighbors in Stony Point

By Laura Bidon

When Hurricane Sandy hit the area in late October, Stony Point was one of the hardest hit areas in Rockland. The Ba Mar Trailer Park in Stony Point was especially hard hit. Residents of Ba Mar were evacuated from their mobile homes prior to the storm, and many of them sought temporary shelter at the Stony Point Presbyterian Conference Center. For over a month, the Stony Point Center housed over 100 storm victims—most of them young Spanish-speaking families. The Center fed and housed them, and worked with each family to find a more permanent housing solution.

In December, as many of the families were preparing to move back to their repaired homes, Stony Point Center launched an initiative to link each family with a local congregation to support them as they moved back to their home. Our church was asked to be a part of this “Family Partnership” initiative, and on Sunday, December 9, Carmen Bermudez and I drove up to Stony Point Center to meet the family we had been linked with.

That evening, we shared a community dinner with the Mazariago Family. Oscar and Rosa Mazariago have three children: Jennifer (16), Angela (14) and Efrain (7). Oscar’s mother, Angela, also lives with the family. They left their native El Salvador, fleeing the culture of crime and violence there, and bought their mobile home at Ba Mar about seven years ago. They spent several years fixing it up, but most of the work they’d put into it was destroyed by the storm. When they first returned to their home

after the storm, they found it filled with almost two feet of water. The floors and walls were ruined. When they opened their dresser drawers, water flowed out.

Oscar has used the time spent at the Stony Point Center to make much-needed repairs to their home, often working there with a handful of friends until midnight or later, returning to Stony Point Center for a few hours’ sleep before getting up to go to his job. By mid-December, Oscar and his family left Stony Point Center to return to their home at Ba Mar.

On Sunday, December 23, Carmen and I again visited Oscar and his family. They welcomed us graciously into their home, which has new floors, newly painted walls, and is being refurnished, little by little. On behalf of our congregation, we presented them with a plate of Christmas cookies and a cash gift to help them enjoy the holidays. We also have been able to provide them with some clothing, as much of theirs was ruined. We will keep the congregation informed of the family’s progress, and any other needs we may be able to help them meet. But most of all, we ask that you keep them—and all the families of Ba Mar—in your thoughts and prayers.

Stop by the Colonial Room to see photos of the family and storm damage to their home.



The annual Congregational Meeting is on Sunday, February 10 after Worship. All members are requested to attend.

Ash Wednesday is February 13. The service will be at 8 PM.





The final total weight of food donations to the People to People food pantry for 2012 came to 1,142 pounds, a new record. Thank you all for your generosity. No good deed goes unpunished, so we're aiming for an even higher weight in 2013. And so the YG has designated February to be Italian Food month. We are encouraging donations of boxed pasta and jars of pasta sauce. Of course, we are very happy to accept any donations that you care to make. The need in the county is great and every little bit helps. Thank you again for a record setting 2012 and let's beat it in 2013!

On January 8, members of our youth group joined with members of the joint youth group in preparing dinner for Helping Hands at the Stony Point United Methodist Church. This is the fifth time we've participated in this program. As you all know, Helping Hands is a program for feeding and sheltering the homeless in Rockland County. Our church will be housing the clients of Helping Hands on three nights in March. We the members of the YG are very proud of our elders, following our example and committing to a mission of this importance.

### **New Hempstead to Host Safe Haven**

New Hempstead Presbyterian Church will be joining in partnership with Helping Hands of Rockland County this season. On March 19, 20 and 21, we'll be providing dinner and overnight shelter to Safe Haven guests. We'll need volunteers from our congregation to prepare and serve dinner. We'll also need overnight chaperones on those dates.

Contact Laura Bidon if you're interested in volunteering, and look for the volunteer sign-up sheet in the Colonial Room.

Helping Hands is a community organization whose primary mission is to help homeless men and women in Rockland County to find alternatives to life on the streets. One way they achieve this is by working with local communities of faith to provide safe haven to homeless individuals. Since 2004, a network of local houses of worship has opened their doors to the guests of Helping Hands, from mid-November through mid-April each year. We are proud to begin our partnership with them this year, and to have this opportunity to help our most vulnerable neighbors.

### **Per Capita Apportionment**

Each year our church contributes funds to the overall mission of the Presbyterian Church in the United States through the Per Capita apportionment. For each member of our church we contribute \$30. What you may ask, is this money for? Glad that you asked!

The money goes to support the three tiers of the broader church. \$19.23 goes to the Hudson River Presbytery to provide for their staff and their assorted committees. It provides resources to the Committee on Ministry and the Committee on Preparing for Ministry, among others.

\$6.87 goes to the General Assembly to pay for holding GA meetings and for GA staff. \$3.90 goes to the Synod of the Northeast. That money is used for staff support of various programs run there.

It is the policy of the New Hempstead Presbyterian Church to pay the entire per capita, regardless of the amount collected from your Per Capita envelopes. In 2013, the total commitment from our church is \$2,910. Please consider contributing \$30 for each person in your family who has formally become a member of our church. Thank you.