



Epistle

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South Congregational Church • 110 South Street • Pittsfield, MA 01201

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January 2013

As this new year begins I offer these reflections from my Christmas Eve meditation as one way to proceed into the mysterious future that lies before us—with wonder.

What is the best Christmas gift in the world? Each of us could give an answer. In the Christmas story, the best gift by far is the gift of wonder. In Isaiah 9, the people who walk in darkness have seen a great light. The light of God's Face has filled them with wonder, awe, and amazement. In Luke 2 Mary and Joseph, the animals, angels, and shepherds all gather around the manger and also see the Face of God. They, too, are filled with wonder, awe, and amazement. Wonder happens when we look into the eyes of another deeply enough so we disappear into a space large and holy. Wonder has to do with love, compassion, and the miracle of life itself.

Two of my most wondrous moments were those when my daughters were born. In each case, after Tora had given birth, and the doctors moved out of the way, I was handed a small bundle wrapped snugly. And in each case as I stared into the face of this bundle a pair of tiny eyes opened. In that moment I realized I was looking into the face of a new person. As tiny as those eyes were, they were doorways into something endless, looking into the miracle of life. In those moments I was filled with wonder as a holy space opened. I was looking into the Face of God.

When Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, angels, and animals looked into the eyes of baby Jesus, they, too, disappeared into something endless. They were looking into the Face of God—the Face of endless, self-giving love was shining upon them and wonder was upon them. It was the best gift in the world. So often we think we want 'things' from God—absolution, inspiration, prosperity, security, answers. We want God to bring evil to an end. We want God to bring the fulfillment of all things. We think these things would be the best gifts.

But the best gift is the gift of Presence, to have God look straight at you, saying, "I'm here, right now. Everything is right here." That's what happened when my daughters were born. That's what happened on the night Jesus was born. And it's what happens when we look deeply into the eyes of another. The gift of wonder is always there, because each of us is a child of God. Each of us is a child of wonder. Each of us can be the Face of Christ for another. For God is always here. The stable of Bethlehem makes it clear that God is present in surprising places.

For instance, one other moment that has filled me with wonder is when I have been with a group of listening, compassionate souls as I shared some of the pain and anguish of my life. They have simply listened and didn't offer answers. They took the pain in, receiving it as a kind of gift. And something wondrous was present as I saw the Faces of endless love in front of me, helping me know there is something deep, nourishing, and whole in this world of ours. God is right here, right now, and everything we need is here. And that is the best gift in the world.

On this night of tender beauty, and in this season of great tragedy, can we open ourselves to the wonder and strength of God's love? Can we be with one another in deep, holy ways so that light shines, love is shared, and our stories of pain and sorrow are listened to and received as a kind of gift? Can we be the Face of Christ for one another? We can become such holy people, because the Child of Wonder has been born among us and lives within us. Amen.

May the wonder of God' coming into our world guide you in 2013.

EPISTLE

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The next Epistle deadline is January 27th at 11 a.m.

OUR CHURCH FAMILY

On December 13th Police Chief F. Mark Bashara received the prestigious Philip Hano Recognition Award from the Western Massachusetts Chiefs of Police for outstanding work during his years of service as police chief of Lanesboro. A very special tribute was a vocal solo by Mark's daughter, Ariana (The Star Spangled Banner) during the ceremony.

Sincere congratulations to you, Mark, from all your friends at South.

Birth:

Louise and Ralph Cianflone have become grandparents for the 11th time to an 8-pound baby girl, Stella Ann, born on December 16th.

Parents are Ralph Jr., and Lorelei Hawkness of Ketchikan, Alaska. Blessings to all!

In Memoriam:

Dorothy Y. Easley died Thursday, December 20, in Peoria Illinois. A memorial mass was held on December 29 at Sacred Heart Church. Interment of ashes for both John and Dorothy will be held in June in Bluefield, West Virginia.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the Tarjick family on the death of Tom's sister, Rosemary Tarjick, on December 30.

A New Year's resolution is something that goes in one year and out the other. ~Author unknown.



EAT TO HEAT

Warm yourself and others with Food and Fellowship

ENTERTAINMENT BY VICKI TRUE



Brunch following worship

January 13, 2013 in Barrett Hall

Help others in our community that need assistance with the high cost of heating

The Board of Missions

Lord & Tailor Thrift And Gift Shop

HAPPY NEW YEAR !!

The Shop is happy to report that in 2012 we were able to contribute \$6750 to the church to pay for part of the maintenance costs for this year.

We particularly want to thank our volunteers for their time and effort. This year we lost three of our best and most faithful volunteers. Lisa Stuart and Harriet Hallas both moved, and Teddy Boyce passed away this year. We truly miss them all.

Again with your help we look forward to supporting the church in our own way through the coming year.

Nancy de Forest and Audra Kinner

A LITTLE HOLY HUMOR

After the christening of his baby brother in church, Jason sobbed all the way home in the back seat of the car. His father asked him three times what was wrong.

Finally, the boy replied, 'That preacher said he wanted us brought up in a Christian home, and I wanted to stay with you guys.'

LECTIONARY FOR JANUARY

January 6 – Epiphany Sunday

Isaiah 60:1-6
Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14
Ephesians 3:1-12
Matthew 2:1-12

January 13 – Baptism of Christ Sunday

Isaiah 43:1-7
Psalm 29
Acts 8:14-17
Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

January 20 – Second Sunday after Epiphany

Isaiah 62:1-5
Psalm 35:5-10
1 Corinthians 12:1-11
John 2:1-11

January 27 – Annual Meeting Sunday

Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10
Psalm 19
1 Corinthians 12:-12-31a
Luke 4:14-21



ANNUAL MEETING

South Church's Annual Meeting will be held on Sunday, January 27th after Worship. Please come and be part of the decisions concerning your church.



SOUTH CHURCH BOOK CLUB

The South Church Book Club, which meets the first Sunday of the month about 15 minutes after the church service, will meet on February 3rd to discuss The Forgotten Garden by Kate Morton. We will also firm up our list of books we plan to read in 2013 and would love any suggestions you may want to share.

This past year we read books that we loved and ones we weren't too crazy about, but we had fun with each and every book. A wonderful by-product was getting to know some amazing South Church women. Come join us.

The books we read last year:

March: Half Broke Horses and Glass Castle by Jeannette Walls

April: Redfield Farm Quakers by Judith Cooper

May: The House of Velvet and Glass by Katherine Howe

June: The God of Animals by Aryn Kyle

July: A Thousand Splendid Suns by K. Hosseini

August: An Unquenchable Thirst: Following Mother Teresa by Mary Johnson

September: Sarah's Key by Tatiana de Rosnay

October: The Guernsey Literary Potato Peel Pie Society by Mary Ann Shaffer & Annie Barrows

November: Yellow Crocus by Laila Ibrahim

December: The Red Tent by Anita Diamant

January: People of the Book by Geraldine Books

February: The Forgotten Garden by Kate Morton
Pam Kueppers

Thank you

THE FOOD PANTRY

Thank you all for contributing detergent and beautiful holiday bags with toiletries. Everyone was very excited to receive them, as all items are very much needed. There were over 300 people who benefitted from your generosity.

January, February and March are toilet paper months. People come looking for it because without it some use paper napkins from fast food places, newspaper, etc. (Sometimes I think we are going backwards instead of forward.) There are many people who have nothing, barely existing, and toilet paper is a luxury.

Mary Wheat



MAY MATTOON

You knew Christmas Day was coming soon when you entered the Parlor on December 3rd and beheld the red and white tablecloths, candles, greenery and miniature Christmas villages nestled among the greenery. A gift table was laden with gifts for the Yankee swap exchange.

After consuming our vast and delectable potluck, we had a short business meeting. The Cookie Sale, held on December 16th, was sold out, but chairwoman Gerry Whiton, remarked that she felt the amount of cookies donated this year was less than usual.

It was voted to purchase two poinsettias for the Christmas decorations in the sanctuary. A collection basket was provided for members who wished to contribute to the Christian Center.

Our gift swap provided a good time as gifts continued to be exchanged between members. The swap was fun and frenzied, but did not compare to the much-sought-after piggy bank of last year. Hostesses Lois Moore and Mary Rentz provided dessert of crème-filled pirouette and chocolate hazelnut cookies with ice cream. All had a good time.

Our next meeting will be Tuesday, January 8th at noontime, which will be our annual meeting with election of officers. The annual dues of five dollars will be collected at that time. Be sure to bring a sandwich.

Have a very Happy New Year!
Alice Gallup

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GENEROUS DONATION

David Boyce, winner of the \$100 May Mattoon money tree at our Harvest Fair, has graciously donated said money to the Food Bank of South Congregational Church.

Thank you, David, for your generosity.
Ruth Campbell - Treasurer, May Mattoon

LADIES BENEVOLENT SOCIETY
Happy New Year

It is a New Year and the Ladies are anxious to finish some of the quilts we have mysteriously found in our closet. We aren't sure what is going on but quite often when we open the closet in the parlor we find yet another project for us. We are very grateful to those mysterious people but wish they would leave their names so we could thank them. We do have one person we refer to us the "Hat Fairy" who gave us some beautiful knitted winter hats that needed to be finished. Not mentioning any names, Hillary Bashara!! We finished them on Thursday and decided it would be a great idea to give them to the people who come for the Food Pantry. Some of these people don't even have coats or gloves, but now they will at least have a warm head. Thank you so much Hillary!!



What a way to start the New Year for those of you who are looking for a group to join. You don't have to know how to quilt, just come for conversation, laughter, and great desserts. We meet on Thursday mornings in the Church Parlor at 9:30. Please come join us.

We have several quilts made and a few more to finish so we have been talking about having a "Quilt Show" in October this year. It is just in the planning stages at this point. Soooo, come and join us and bring your ideas. We would love to see you!!

Lisa Stuart is now at Melbourne Place in Pittsfield. If you have a chance, please go and visit her. She would love the company.

Until next time!!! Marge Demary

Many people look forward to a new year
for a new start on old habits.
~ Author unknown

**South Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
Pittsfield, Massachusetts**

Berkshire S. S.

January 11, 2013

To the Members of South Congregational Church:

The 162nd Annual Meeting of South Church will be held following the Parlor worship service on January 27, 2013.

The purpose of the meeting:

To hear the reports of the pastor, elected officials, and boards and committees.

To elect new officers and new members for boards and committees.

To approve a budget for 2013.

To discuss any additional business brought by the members.

Respectfully submitted,

**John Anthony
Clerk**

Happy New Year!

January 2013

<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
		1 NEW YEAR'S DAY Office Closed	2 Food Pantry 8 – 11 am UCC Clergy Meeting Noon St. Joe's Dinner 5 pm	3 Food Pantry 8:30-11:30 am Ladies Benevolent 9:30 am Chancel Choir 7 pm	4 Lord & Tailor 10 am-4 pm AA 6:15 pm	5 AA 10:15 am Lord & Tailor 12-4 pm
6 Parlor Worship with Communion 10 am Women's Book Club	7 Yarn Spinners 7 pm Trustees Budget Meeting	8 Men's Forum Noon May Mattoon Annual Meeting Noon Mission Board 7:15 pm Diaconate 7 pm	9 Food Pantry 8 – 11 am St. Joe's Dinner 5 pm Called To Care 5:15 pm Trustees 6 pm	10 Food Pantry 8:30-11:30 am Ladies Benevolent 9:30 am 12-Step Class 6:30 pm Chancel Choir 7 pm	11 Lord & Tailor 10 am-4 pm AA 6:15 pm	12 AA 10:15 am Lord & Tailor 12-4 pm Set-up for Mission Board Breakfast
13 Parlor Worship With Vikki True 10 am Mission Board "Eat for Heat" Brunch Parlor Worship Experience 7 pm	14 Yarn Spinners 7 pm	15 Council of Congregations 9 am Men's Forum Noon Church Council 7 pm	16 Food Pantry 8 – 11 am St. Joe's Dinner 5 pm	17 Food Pantry 8:30-11:30 am Ladies Benevolent 9:30 am 12-Step Class 6:30 pm Chancel Choir 7 pm	18 Lord & Tailor 10 am-4pm AA 6:15 pm	19 AA 10:15 am Lord & Tailor 12-4 pm Pittsfield Squares 7pm
20 Parlor Worship 10 am Budget Review Meeting 11:30	21 Martin Luther King Jr. Day Yarn Spinners 7 pm	22 Men's Forum Noon	23 Food Pantry 8-11 am Church & Ministry 4 pm St. Joe's Dinner 5:00 pm Berk Highlanders 7 pm	24 Food Pantry 8:30-11:30 am Ladies Benevolent 9:30 am 12-Step Class 6:30 pm Chancel Choir 7pm	25 Lord & Tailor 10 am-4pm AA 6:15 pm	26 AA 10:15 am Lord & Tailor 12-4 pm
27 Parlor Worship 10 am ANNUAL MEETING 11:30 am Epistle Deadline 11 am	28 Yarn Spinners 7 pm	29 Men's Forum Noon	30 Food Pantry 8-11 am St. Joe's Dinner 5 pm	31 Food Pantry 8:30-11:30 am Ladies Benevolent 9:30 am 12-Step Class 6:30 pm Chancel Choir 7pm		