

COMMUNITY UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Nurturing Spiritual Growth and Working for Social Justice

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Stephen S. Halsted, Pastor

December 2002

Lectionary for December

December 1st, First Sunday of Advent

Isa 64:1-9; Ps 80:1-7, 17-19; 1 Cor 1:3-9; Mk 13:24-37.

December 8th, Second Sunday of Advent

Isa 40:1-11; Ps 85:1-2, 8-13; 2 Pet 3:8-15a; Mk 1:1-8.

December 15th, Third Sunday of Advent

Isa 61:1-4, 8-11; Ps 126 or Lk 1:47-55; 1 Thess 5:16-24;
Jn 1:6-8, 19-28.

December 22nd, Fourth Sunday of Advent

2 Sam 7:1-11, 16; Lk 1:47-55 or Ps 89:1-4, 19-26;
Rom 16:25-27; Lk 1:26-38

December 29th, First Sunday after Christmas

Isa 61:10-62:3; Ps 148; Gal 4:4-7; Lk 2:22-40.

that they could have as their keepsake to take with them when they leave home and have their own Christmas tree.

It is in these simple and precious family traditions that we may live the words of a great Christian hymn: "Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love; the fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above."

Please join us for worship on each of the four Advent Sundays and Christmas Eve as we prepare together to celebrate the birthday of our "Prince of Peace" Isaiah 9:6

Dear Friends,

The Christian Season of Pentecost draws to a close on Sunday, November 24. This marks the end of the cycle of seasons in the Christian calendar.

We begin a new cycle on Sunday, December 1, which is the first Sunday in the Season of Advent. I always look forward to the ritual of lighting the advent candles each Sunday as we count down the weeks to Christmas Day. This uniquely special time of year affords us ample time to prepare a place in our hearts for the re-birth of the Christ spirit in our lives.

I find that my Advent Season is greatly enriched by the simple and precious family traditions that the Halsteds have developed over the years. Perhaps your family also has its own traditions or would like to start some new. My favorite tradition centers around tree ornaments. As a child our family always made a real ceremony out of decorating the tree. As my brothers and I grew up and started our own families, my mother thoughtfully started giving us special ornaments to put on our trees to remind us of our family ties.

Then when our children were born, Marcy and I began giving them a special tree ornament each year

Blessings & Peace,

Steve



PRAYERS

The Monday Lunch Group offers prayers each week for those persons and needs of which they are aware. Please write your requests on a slip of paper and place it in the offering plate or one of the prayer jars at the back of the sanctuary or in Pilgrim House.

The Caring Committee wants to know of the special needs of any of our members and friends so that we can respond to those needs. Please keep us informed by calling Marge Eckels, 787-5552, with any news.

MEETINGS and EVENTS

Women's Support Group - There will be no meeting in December.

Monday Lunch Group meets at 12:15 each Monday in the Hoffmann Room. Bring a sandwich and enjoy their traditional Christmas activities during December.

Retirees

Are you free Monday, December 9th at 11 am? Come join the Retirees when Quail Ridge Book Store owner, Nancy Olson, returns by popular request. Bring your sandwich and come prepared for a fun meeting. Beverage and dessert are served.

Quiet Advent Mini-Retreat, Wednesday, December 4

Slow down, be still, and prepare. Join others at the church on Wednesday evening, December 3, from 6:00-7:30 pm for a sacred time of silence, prayer and preparation for the coming of Christ. There will be a simple supper 6:00-6:30. From 6:30-7:30 there will be an opportunity for personal meditation and a sharing of communion. So we can plan for numbers, please sign up at the church office or on a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board in the hallway. Feel free to come at the last minute even if you haven't signed up.

SINGLES, COUPLES, CHILDREN, FAMILIES
watch for the **GIVING TREE**

Christmas is more complete when we can share with others. Some can share money and material goods. Others can share time, physical assistance, artistic abilities, understanding, or friendship. This year we will have a giving tree at CUCC. The tree will be in the Narthex on November 30th and December 6th and December

13th. On the tree, you can find a little information about someone with whom you can share a gift at Christmas. Look for a suggestion that matches what you can share. Specific details will be explained at the tree.

Also, if you know of a need you'd like to add to the tree, or of a person with whom CUCC folks can share through the giving tree, please contact Margaret Osborne. Your gift idea can be added to the tree. Margaret can be reached by email Margaret@NCHealthyStart.org, by phone at work (828-1819), or by phone at home (266-1153).



CUCC Christmas Party

Plan to attend the CUCC Christmas party on Saturday, December 14, at 6:30 PM.

This year we're making it as easy as possible for the adults of the church to have this special evening of fun, fellowship, and celebration. Mitch Hazouri (of Mitch's Tavern on Hillsborough St.) will be catering the party, so the food will be good and will be served in Mitch's inimitable style. We will not have a sit-down meal, but there will be heavy (and good quality) finger food. So don't be afraid to come with an appetite.

In keeping with tradition, this event will be for adults. (The younger children will have a special Christmas celebration of their own at a later date.) Dress will be informal, but if you have special Christmas garb or enjoy dressing for the season, this is your chance.

No need to bring anything since all food and drinks will be provided. But in order to help plan for the event, we will be asking participants to purchase tickets in advance, or at least to make a reservation. Tickets will be \$7 per person (to cover food, punch, and wine) and may be obtained after 10:30 worship on any Sunday prior to December 14.

If it is not convenient for you to pick up tickets at the church prior to the party, you may make a reservation by phone to the church office or via e-mail by writing to christmas@communityucc.org and giving your name and the number of tickets you wish to reserve. (Tickets reserved in this manner may be paid for at the Christmas party.)

Christmas Eve Worship

We will offer 2 services on Christmas to celebrate the birth of Jesus. At 5:00 pm we will have an informal half-hour service for families with Christmas Carols and the sharing of Christmas stories ending with a candlelight circle and recessional singing "Silent Night". At 11:00 pm we will have a more formal service with choir participation and a scriptural reading of the birth narrative and traditional Christmas Carols and candle light atmosphere.

Hope to see you at one or both of these special services as we celebrate the "Prince of Peace".

BOARD OF DEACONS

The December meeting will be Thursday, December 5 at 7:30 in the Pilgrim House.



The organ has been purchased! A big thank you to all who have so generously given to our organ fund that has enabled us to go forth with the purchase.

CHURCH COUNCIL

SEMI-ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

We will hold CUCC's next Semi-Annual Congregational Meeting on Sunday, December 8th,

immediately following the 10:30 service. We will discuss next year's budget and the pledge drive, as well as provide an update on other church activities. As you know, Semi-Annual Meetings are "open" forums where you are welcome to raise any topic or question you'd like.

Child care and refreshments will be provided.

FINANCE

The Finance Committee is encouraged by the response to the stewardship drive thus far and encourage those who have not yet submitted their pledge to do so.

CHRISTIAN WITNESS

WIDER OUTREACH COMMITTEE

Thursday, December 12 at 6:00 pm is the final 2002 meeting for the Wider Outreach Committee.

Let **Loaves and Fishes** prepare some of the world's best **chili** for your winter enjoyment and Super Bowl parties! Place your order by calling Shannon Core at 846-0902 (or use the sign-up sheet on The Coming Events bulletin board in the hallway) by Thursday, January 16. Pick up your order from Hudson Presbyterian Church on Friday, January 24, 3:00 - 7:00 p.m. or Saturday 25, 9:00 - 12:00 noon. Meat or vegetarian is \$8.00 per quart and packaged in freezable containers.

Christmas Wright Center Meal

If you would like to help cook and/or serve the Wright Center meal on December 15, call Jane Smith (787-6539).

Reminder: **Food Bags** will be collected on December 1st (next Sunday).



The imminence of Thanksgiving must have inspired our members! We contributed a grand total of 25 food bags to the Urban Ministries Center. That's our goal every month, so please continue to contribute at that rate. Thank you!

SOCIAL ACTION

Social Action Calendar

December 4- "Stop the Arms Race Vigil" noon, Fayetteville Street Mall.

December 5- International Human Rights Award dinner. The recipient will be Mary-Lou Leiser-Smith, founder and Coordinator of the Coalition for Peace with Justice. She has been a leader in bringing together Christians, Jews and Muslims to seek just solutions which can provide the foundation for a lasting peace. NCSU University Club. Social Hour at 6:30 pm, with dinner at 7:15. Cost is \$27 per person. Make reservations by calling Joyce Scapicchio, 571-9840, or mail your check payable to HRCNC to Joyce, 4701 Metcalf Dr., Raleigh, NC 27612.

December 5- North Carolinians Against Gun Violence, Annual Meeting. 7:30-9:30 pm, Pullen Memorial Baptist Church, honoring State Representative Jennifer Weiss and featuring Jeff Gibbs, Field Producer and Composer, "Bowling for Columbine."

December 9, 5:30 pm- Reading of the Bill of Rights in the State Capitol Rotunda with the Governor, the Chief Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court and other dignitaries.

December 10, 12 noon- Reading of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on the steps of the Wake County Court House. Dutch lunch to follow at the Light House Restaurant.

December 12- UNA-USA, Wake County Chapter, Annual Meeting. (Time and place to be announced.)

Statement of United Church of Christ leaders opposing U.S. war against Iraq

With heavy hearts we hear once again the drumbeat of war against Iraq. As United Church of Christ leaders committed to God's reign of justice and peace in the world and to the just conduct of our nation, we firmly oppose this advance to war.

The case for a preemptive attack on Iraq has not been made. While Iraq's weapons potential is uncertain, the death that would be inflicted on all sides in a war is certain. Striking against Iraq now will not serve to prevent terrorism or defend our nation's interests. We fear that war would only provoke greater regional instability and lead to the mass destruction it is intended to prevent.

The human cost of war would be enormous, both to the United States and to Iraq. The most severe impact of a military assault on Iraq would be on its already suffering civilian population. Over a decade of containment and isolation, of crippling comprehensive sanctions, and of routine U.S. and British bombing have created miserable conditions inside Iraq. The sanctions have induced poverty, malnutrition, and starvation on the most vulnerable of the Iraqi people, including millions of children. These civilians, innocent of the atrocities Saddam Hussein has committed, should not bear the burden of deprivation and death such a war would surely exact on them.

While we condemn Saddam Hussein's repressive policies, we are alarmed that our nation's leaders would consider taking unilateral military action to remove him. To do so without any support from our Arab friends, without allied consensus, and without United Nations authorization puts U.S. leadership and credibility under international law at stake. A preemptive war against Iraq also risks the solidarity and good will the global community has shown the United States this past year, already strained in recent months by our nation's sharpened turn toward unilateralism. U.S. military action and our uncertain plans for Iraq afterward, including the potential for a long-term U.S. presence in Iraq, jeopardize most of all our tenuous relations with Arab and Muslim states in the region, in turn

severely damaging U.S. prospects of successfully brokering new Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

The General Synod of the United Church of Christ has joined churches around the world in committing to the World Council of Churches' Decade to Overcome Violence. In that spirit, we call on our leaders to step back from the brink of war. Rather than lining nations up against an "axis of evil," our nation should engage in honest and open consultation with parties around the world and especially in the Middle East to seek a non-military solution to the threat that Iraq may pose. That solution should begin with ending economic sanctions, which have only strengthened Iraq's leader while weakening its people. A comprehensive approach for U.S. policy in the region should be built on consistent principles of human rights and constraints on militarization and weapons development for all parties. We should more fully explore opportunities for building bridges across ethnic and regional lines in the Middle East. We join with the World Council of Churches in its recent call for the Government of Iraq "to respect the resolutions of the UN Security Council... to cooperate fully with UN inspectors deployed to oversee compliance, and to guarantee full respect of the civil and political, economic, social and cultural human rights for all of its citizens." We call upon President Bush and members of Congress to seek truly global coalitions and solutions to the forces of division and violence in our midst.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

CUCC Church School Program:

ADVENT ACTIVITIES PLANNED

Hear about Mary's family, and make a star for the church Advent tree – **December 1.**

Learn that God asks each of us to create extraordinary things, and make a gift for the congregation – **December 8.**

You are invited to bring a bag lunch and stay after worship with your family on **December 8.** Preschool and elementary families will work together to make a banner that will be used in the sanctuary in the season of Christmas. Bring your favorite Christmas tape or CD and some cookies to share. *Dress to get messy and have fun.* Family members who don't attend CUCC are welcome to join us to work on the project. During Advent, we are celebrating families!

Mark your calendar to reserve 9:00 am, Saturday morning, **December 14,** for a dress rehearsal to practice for a Children and Youth Sunday on **December 15.** We'll be leading the congregation in remembering the birth of Jesus.

Children and Youth will stay in worship for the last Sunday of Advent, **December 22.**

CUCC Meditations on Hannah, Elizabeth & Mary

Research for the church school lessons on Hannah, Elizabeth & Mary led to beautiful meditations on family and God's miracles. Adults are welcome to use for meditation a summary of the work by Geraldine Bryan & Judy Kiel. Pick up a copy of the 4-part series in the literature rack.

Adult Forum

The Adult Forum meets each Sunday morning 9:15–10:15 in the Vaughan Wing. Please join us to hear informed speakers and to participate in stimulating discussion.

December schedule:

December 22 – Stephanie Ford will be talking about the safe journey of Christian women mystics.

December 29 – Keeping the Sabbath – restoration time, the basis for balance and effective action for our busy lifestyle.

TOGETHER IN MINISTRY

During two recent Congregational Meetings, church members approved several recommendations regarding changes to the CUCC Constitution and By-Laws. As the accompanying graph illustrates, some of the more significant recommendations include:

- Changing the word “Boards” to “Ministries”. This emphasizes the idea that we strive to do God’s work and to minister to each other and to those in need in our local and worldwide communities.
- Adding two new ministries: one for “Growth & Discipleship” and the other for “Stewardship”.
- Realigning the functions of some of the ministries to better reflect the work these ministries are actually performing and to better focus the efforts of each ministry.
- Eliminating the words “Standing Committees” from the Constitution and By-Laws and replacing them with “Functions”. For example, the Deacons Ministry will have such permanent functions as Arts in Worship, Sacraments & Chancel, Caring, Ushers, Pastoral Relations and Personnel Support. **The work for these functions will continue to be done by committees: they will simply not be called “Standing Committees”.** This means that in many respects our work will be carried out in the same way and by many of the same committees and individuals as before; they will simply not be referred to as “Standing Committees” in the Constitution and By Laws. This will give us a greater flexibility over the years to add or eliminate committees to perform these functions without being in violation of the Constitution and By Laws.
- Having 12 Deacons serve on the Deacons Ministry.
- Recommending that each ministry have a chair and chair-elect serve at the same time so as to provide continuity from year to year.
- Continuing the work of the “Religious Education Ministry” while redefining its charter.

- Establishing that we will hold at least three Congregational Meetings throughout the course of the year.

The “Growth & Discipleship Ministry” was added to help us focus on attracting and nurturing new members to our church. The functions under this ministry will include Communications, Shepherding and Welcoming and Fellowship. Other functions may be created as the need arises.

The “Stewardship Ministry” functions will include Nominating, Finance and Fund Raising. By keeping these functions under one ministry, it is believed that we will be better able to steward the time, talent and treasure resources of our congregation. It will also allow us to work on these areas throughout the entire year, and not just at specific times of the year.

During the next six weeks, various groups will be working on drafting the sections of the Constitution and By-Laws that are impacted by these changes. They will then be presented to the Church Council for their consideration and then presented to the Congregation for a vote at the Open Congregational Meeting to be held January 26.

In order to give us time to make this transition, we are asking that all current Board heads and committee members, if they are able, to remain in their positions until the end of March. That will give us time to better define what the functions of each ministry are, to draft and vote on the changes to the Constitution and By-Laws and to work with the nominating committee to invite members to participate in these ministries.

We will be discussing this in greater detail at the Open Congregational Meeting to be held Sunday, December 8 after the 10:30 service. In the mean time, if you have any questions, feel free to call Steve Halsted at the church office or Council Moderator Susan Lane at 846-5881.

OUR PEOPLE

From a message received by Vandy Bradow:

Hope your trip was a good one; sounded like a real adventure. Just wanted you and Monday lunch and newsletter committee know how much I enjoy reading about your activities. Sounds like much good going on. We at Broadway United Methodist are in the midst of "A 40 Days of Purpose". It has been pretty intense for me. I was "invited" to lead a small group in spite of my limited leadership abilities, so have thrown myself into trying to do my best. These many small groups have proved necessary because of so much growth in the membership and a real desire to connect with each other. They have become an area of support in spiritual growth, giving tools to help with daily commitment to Christ. At the same time, I am again taking part in a 34 week Bible study, termed Discipleship. I was very interested in hearing about the "A Hased Weekend". Just want you to know, that even if I am not in your midst, physically, you are in my thoughts and we share a Christian community.

Carol Tosczak

LET US CELEBRATE

Join the Southern Conference in the celebration of our call to **Stephen W. Camp** to be our Conference Minister. The event is Sunday, January 19, 2003 at 6:00 pm, Ebenezer United Church of Christ in Burlington, NC.

SPECIAL DAYS

Youth Birthdays

December Birthdays*

12/13/1995 – Teresa Fletchinger
12/13/1992 – Fidel Viadef
12/19/1991 – Anna Roach-Howell
12/22/1996 – Katherine Lan Manus

January Birthdays*

1/3/95 – Emma Paul
1/13/87 – Sarah Huffstetler
1/17/94 – David Cookmeyer
1/17/94 – Andrea Osborne-Newman
1/25/91 – Charles Fletchinger

**If you are missing from this list, we apologize. Please notify the office so we can update our records.*