MISSION STATEMENT: “As followers of Jesus Christ, we rejoice in God’s plan for a just, loving, and peaceful world, and we commit ourselves to making it a reality for all people everywhere.”

Advent 2011
Volume 29, Issue 3

From the Pastor

D o you know that every time we say the Lord’s Prayer, we pray for Advent?

The second request of the Lord’s Prayer in Latin reads: “Adveniat Regnum Tuum.” In English: “Your kingdom come.” It’s clear that we are not praying for the speedy arrival of the pre-Christmas season with its whipped up consumerism and slowly awakening seasonal sentimentality. We pray and we await for a different advent. The advent of God’s kingdom! We pray for a radical change in how the world operates. How radical? Very radical. Just let us decipher and hear afresh the requests of this “advent” prayer.

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

What divine will is done in heaven that is not done on earth?

Well, we can start with the divine protection of all the vulnerable and the weak. In the Bible they are called widows and orphans. Their protection is so important to God, that it is repeated over and over again in the Law and by the Prophets. In the New Testament it even necessitated a complete reordering in the hierarchy of the heavenly bureaucracy. Guardian angels of the little ones were lifted up into the presence of God, replacing the big shots of the cherubim and seraphim with all the archangels. (Matthew 18:10). Just imagine elevating social services (guardian angels) before the ministry of war (I resist using that misleading euphemism of ministry of “defense”). Just imagine, on a personal level, supporting the local food pantry and homeless shelters before leaving for Christmas shopping. Modeling our lives according to heavenly orders – that is what we pray for in Lord’s Prayer. This is the Advent we seek.

Give us this day our daily bread.

Hunger in Jesus’ Galilee was as real as it is in our world. These words were intended for, and were originally said, by those who were hungry or lived from day to day. For many of us, who are not hungry, these words have a different meaning. We pray for the coming of a world where everyone has enough and world abundance is shared each day. No one can expand his or her life by simply hoarding up extra food or resources, (the main lesson from the story of the stupid

(Continue on page 5)

News from the Session

A s you know the Session is the ruling board of Rutgers Church. Soon we will have to learn new language, as the Presbyterian Church USA has moved to a “New Form of Government,” and church Sessions will now be known as Coun-

It has taken two years of hard work, but we have moved from a deficit to a surplus po-

The Music Director search task force is busy reading resumes and cover letters from many candidates for our permanent Music

Diana Austin has taken the lead on correct-

We welcome our new Music Director. The funds received will support the pur-

Chase of new choir robes!
Rutgers Church Community Programs

Dave Mammen, Church Administrator, recently sat down with Cindy Schaffer and Lesley Countryman, two instructors in Rutgers Church Community Programs, to talk about their work. Cindy and Leslie teach Handprints, a child-centered art program where young artists (1-5 years old) are free to explore and be creative; Art Play (for children 3-5 years old, where projects are done with art books written for children, so they can talk about art as well as make it), and Once Upon an Artist (for 5-8 year olds, with projects based on a specific artist along with free studio time).

Dave: The classes you have created and led over the past 10 years – for hundreds of kids and families – exemplify the values of Rutgers Community Programs: providing a nurturing, fun environment where children can learn through creative play.

Lesley: We’re trying to offer arts education to kids without it being overly pedagogical. In the art studio at Rutgers, kids can have fun. We give them confidence, without judgment. It’s about kids discovering things, in real time and space, with great freedom to determine what’s happening.

Cindy: Sometimes we pick a fun idea, then find an artist to go with it. This week, we’re thinking about Halloween, with scary graveyard scenes on shoeboxes. So...Tim Burton! We talk about his drawing; how he started to become an artist at the same age as the kids in our class; how he “practiced, practiced, practiced”; how he lets his imagination run wild.

Lesley: We help the kids make connections with the world. We tell the kids, “You can be an artist, too!” And we send a message back to parents: go see exhibits with your children. This week, we’re finding an artist to go with it. This week, we’re going to talk about their work, and other work, in a supportive way. The art vocabulary keeps building.

Dave: You both exemplify how our instructors have been with us for many years. We support each other through team teaching and collaboration. What experiences have shaped your approach here at Rutgers?

Cindy: We’re both moms, and we loved making art with our kids. When my daughter was 3 years old and having playdates, our house was where the art projects took place. Maybe it was because our house was already messy, or so I didn’t mind the chaos! Then when my daughter was in 3rd grade, I started a craft club at her school. One thing led to another; through my kids I discovered what I should have been doing with my life.

Lindsay: I was a performing artist, in dance and theater. I knew Cindy, who was a casting director at an ad agency where I would audition for voice work. At PS 88 in the Anderson School we met a lot of talented parents and all of us working together had success in getting grants to support arts education. Today, school budgets for arts have been cut. Finding space for arts education in the schools is a problem, and with the economy today, it is hard to find what to work if they can. It is harder today to have parent volunteers helping support afterschool arts activities. So programs like ours at Rutgers are an oasis of sorts. The Church has studio and classroom space, organizing capacity, and the resources to be able to offer programs for the wider community on a not-for-profit basis. The Church is able to maintain the value of nurturing creativity and joy.

Cindy: We’d love for Church members to come visit us on the 4th floor and see what the kids are doing.

Cindy Schaffer and Lesley Countryman

Gratitude for talented Talent by Susan Scherer

Talent was born in New Orleans a stone’s throw from my sister Carole’s house. Talent although his black and white and brown markings were a little lopsided, making his nose and mouth look crooked. With a noble, tolerant nature, he walked like a boy, carefree and easy-going. When we’d go for walks in the neighborhood he befriended many of our homeless neighbors and then would sit contentedly in their laps.

He liked visiting Rutgers Church. He attended worship services and when he was six weeks old he helped with the children’s message. He often visited with me in the church office. And was particularly friendly with his caregivers Sue, Beverly, Bob, and Lynn and Gladys.

From the Pastor (Continued from 1st page)

wealthy farmer in Luke 12:13-21). And no one can eat paper money, bonds, or bricks of gold. Ultimately all of it, in some way, is a social and societal (or if you wish economic) agreement that we will care for one another. Just imagine eliminating all the private commercial retrenchment and the wealthy farmer’s just and generous solidarity system. Anyway, it is always today’s generation that cares for the past one, and trusts to be cared for by the future one. Solidarity, sharing and mutual care is the daily mood we pray for and look for during Advent.

And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Very appropriately, in our tradition, we use the words “debts and debtors.” Do you really believe that God was ever seriously concerned about anyone trespassing on someone else’s property? We do not live in medieval England anymore. We are not warlords of dark ages for whom pillaging and trespassing was a capital offense.

Similarly, the understanding of sin got highly spiritualized, psychologized, and detached from the world’s everyday reality. Meanwhile, debts were closely very close to God’s heart from the oldest of times. There are many biblical rules that attempt to control debt. Every seventh year there should be a remission of all outstanding debts (Deuteronomy 15:1f) and the release of any debt slaves. (Deuteronomy 15:2f). In the agricultural society, the growing disparity between rich and poor was controlled by instituting a Year of Jubilee, when all the land property was restituted to its original owners or their heirs. (Leviticus 25:10).

Translated into our context, we pray and anticipate an advent of a world with lenient bankruptcy laws; a world where lending and mortgaging is controlled and regulated to protect the poor. We pray and promise not to torment or enslavestone anyone through money; freedom and relationships have precedence over money.

This is our Advent prayer: We pray and wait for the protection of the most vulnerable, for solidarity in sharing life resources, and for the elimination of enslaving debt. These are just three aspects of a radical divine world that we anticipate in Advent. So let us pray “Advenit regnum tuum.”

Andrew Stiehlik

Living the Questions home screenings. Offering the highest quality theology with the friendliness of a home setting. Several members of the church have graciously opened their homes for an evening or afternoon of discussion and fellowship. These small groups will meet just for one occasion (no longer commitment!) for viewing a short 20-minute DVD program about thinking Christianly, about the world we live in, and then discussing what we have seen and heard, or whatever we need to discuss. The dates and times for these groups are as follows:

December 2 at 4 PM, December 3 at 6:30 PM, December 4 at 1 PM, December 5 at 6:30 PM and December 11 at 7 PM.

There are still some openings available; you can register this Sunday during Coffee hour.
December 2011

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Worship Service
Christmas Day
11:00 a.m.

25th Candlelight Pageant
School and Sunday School
11:00 a.m.
Offering
Christmas Joy
18

Justice Network
All Church
12:45 p.m.
Meeting
Board of Deacons
12:45 p.m.

Advent 1st Sunday of Sun
Preaching Schedule

4

Mon

Building Closed
and Office Church House

8

Wed

Christmas Eve Service
6:30 p.m.
Carol
7:00 p.m.
Christmas Eve Service

December Birthdays!
1- Stacy Kim and John Bessonette
4- Alexandre Yu
6- James Finn
7- Byron Shafer
9- Kenneth Starger
13- Lisa Pinto
17- Casey Knox
18- Jennifer Nunez
21- Carl Lindskoog
27- Lenore Kara
31- Joy Rose

Sundays
9:30 a.m. Adult Forum
9:30 a.m. & 12:30 Choir Rehearsal
10:45 a.m. Infant & Child Care
11:00 a.m. Worship Service
11:15 a.m. Sunday School
12:15 p.m. Coffee Hour

What is the Christmas Joy Offering?
For more than 70 years, Presbyterians have given generously at Christmas to support the unmet needs of families who have devoted their lives to the mission of the PC(USA). Thanks to the enduring legacy of the Christmas Joy Offering, today’s racial ethnic Presbyterian students may receive much-needed scholarship assistance while their schools may get help with basic operating costs. With the burden of their educational debt reduced, today’s Presbyterian students and future church leaders are more freely able to discover and pursue their professional goals. All PC(USA)-related schools and colleges are open to any qualified student regardless of race. Gifts through the Christmas Joy Offering will allow these schools and colleges to continue the ministries we have carried out for decades, even in an ever-changing, increasingly mobile and high-tech world.

Special Events Committee
The next event sponsored by the Special Events Committee will be the All-Church Christmas Social, which will be held following Morning Worship on Sunday, December 18 at 12:45 p.m. Come and enjoy the festivities.

R. Wellington Jones