



EAST CRAFTSBURY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH NEWSLETTER

Dec 2014 - Jan 2015

Growing in faith ~ Supporting each other ~ Serving others ~ Guided by Christ

Gina Hilton-VanOsdall, Interim Pastor * Alex Hurt, Minister of Pastoral Care* John Weaver, Director of Music Ministry * Barbara Ulman, Assistant Organist *James MacKellar, Parish Associate

From the Pastor's Pen

Don't Be Afraid of the Dark

It's about this time of year, when the gardens have all been put to bed, that daylight savings time ends. The glorious green of summer is gone, the warming colors of autumn now composting in a pile in backyard corners. Winterish winds blow through the bare branches and it is dark...terribly dark. It is a difficult time of year for many people for various reasons. In general, we tend not to like the dark. If you think about how the words are used figuratively, our bias toward light and against dark becomes quite clear.

Biblically speaking, light tends to be associated with good, darkness with evil. This holds true in literature as well. The celestial realm of the gods is filled with light, while the underworld—whether it is Greek *Hades*, Hindu *Naraka*, or Norse *Niflheim*—is a subterranean realm of darkness. There is White Magic, which is healing and good, and Black Magic, destructive and evil. Light and darkness are also used to symbolize knowledge and ignorance. We “shed light on a problem” or we have a “bright idea”; in contrast we “live in obscurity”, be “in the dark” or have a “clouded mind.” And history names one era the Dark Ages and another the Age of Enlightenment. Light and Dark are also associated with happiness and sadness. We have “a radiant smile,” we “light up” when we see someone we love, we “beam with joy” and our eyes “shine with delight.” We also experience a “black mood,” the “depths of despair,” the “darkest hour.”

All in all, we view darkness as negative, something to be avoided. Darkness is something we fear. Light is the thing for which we strive: for you are children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or darkness (1 Thessalonians 5:5). God is the bringer of light: It is you who light my lamp; the Lord, my God, lights up my darkness (Psalm

18:28). Indeed, God *is* light: God is light; in God there is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5).

God may be Light. But neither is God a stranger to darkness. Indeed, as Barbara Brown Taylor points out, “there is one word for darkness in the Bible that stands out from the rest. It shows up in the book of Exodus, at the foot of Mount Sinai, right after God has delivered the Torah to the people: *Then the people stood at a distance, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was* (Exodus 20:21).”

What we learn in the above passage from Exodus is that this deep darkness is a marker of God's presence as surely as light. Yet we have trouble holding those two together in one, because, by and large, we create opposites to understand our world—pure and impure, insider and outsider, good and evil, light and dark. But darkness does not originate in a different place than light. “I am the Lord, and there is no other. I form light and create darkness, I make weal and create woe; I the Lord do all these things” (Isa. 45:6–7). (1)

We need not fear the dark. During these darker days of winter, during the long nights of the Advent season, we are reminded that for God there is no difference between darkness and light. Advent can be a fertile season—a time of reflection, renewed connection, and deepening. Indeed, seeds deep in the ground begin to grow before they ever see the sun. In the same way, in the darkest days, “God goes on giving birth to the truly human in Christ and in us.” (2)

1. Barbara Brown Taylor, “Redeeming Darkness.” The Christian Century, Nov 28, 2011.
2. *ibid.*

ECPC in Service

Session

Class of 2015: Elsie Hurt, Woodman Page, Valerie Morrison

Class of 2016: Louise Calderwood, Anne Page, Jenny Stoner

Class of 2017: Nelson Maynard, Steve Quigley, Bruce Shields

Clerk of Session: Jenny Stoner

Treasurer: Anne Page

Committees

Worship: Steve Quigley chair; John Weaver, Marianne Weaver, Woody Page, Eunice Kinsey

Mission, Care & Outreach: Valerie Morrison, chair; Louise Calderwood, Anne Page, Woody Page, Nicole Kish, Deanna Kish, Doug Newton, Natalie Kinsey

Christian Education: Steve Quigley, Mary Quigley, Elsie Hurt

Personnel: Elsie Hurt, chair, Tom Warnock, Neil Ulman, Dave Stoner, Neil Urie

Operations: Elsie Hurt, Jenny Stoner co-chairs; Bruce Shields, Anne Page, Morris Rowell, Dave Rowell

Nominating: Elsie Hurt, Georgette Rowell, Marjory Morrill

Dinner: Kay Shields, chair; Sandy Benson, Mary Quigley, Nancy Kozub

Assistant Treasurers: Dave Stoner, Tom Warnock

Special Christmas Concert

The East Craftsbury Presbyterian Church Choir will perform the beautiful Christmas Oratorio by Camille Saint-Saëns on Monday, December 22nd at 7:30 PM. A professional orchestra of strings, harp and organ will accompany the choir and five superb soloists. John Weaver will conduct this 45-minute work from the Estey reed organ console.

Dr. Weaver will also play some Christmas organ music on the church's Wicks pipe organ. A free will offering will be received to partially defray the expenses.

Additional singers are cordially invited to join the choir for this special event. Rehearsals will be on Thursday nights, December 4, 11 and 18 at 7:00 PM at the East Craftsbury Church.

Music During Advent

Our tradition of "raising a joyful noise to the Lord" will have full expression in the carefully selected anthems during Advent.

November 30: *Prepare the Way before Him* - Joachim von Burck (1541-1630)

December 7: *Watchman, Tell Us of the Night* - John Ness Beck

December 14: *This Is the Record of John* - John Weaver

December 21: *Magnificat* - Chant by Samuel Sebastian Wesley

Worship on Sunday, December 28 will be a traditional service of Lessons and Carols

Christmas Joy Offering

Each year at Christmas time we pause to say "thank you" to Presbyterian church workers and their families with a special Joy Offering. For over 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). This congregation is known for our generosity in remembering both church workers and their families and Presbyterian-affiliated racial ethnic schools and colleges.. Add the Joy Offering to your celebration of Christmas with a gift either December 21 or December 28.

Cookies and More Cookies

Again this year the Hardwick Area Food Pantry has asked that we at ECPC provide homemade cookies for inclusion in Christmas baskets. Last year we exceeded the request for 44 dozen cookies and the recipients were delighted. Please sign up on the sheet in the back of the church to see if you can help us meet this goal again. Kay Shields will share a complete update on Sunday.

When you have made your cookies, please:

- Place them by 6's in zip lock plastic bags.
- Deliver them to the food basket at church.
- Sign them in on the sheet next to the basket (important for keeping track of numbers.)

OR

Keep them frozen and bring them to the Christmas Women's Breakfast on the 13th. We can bag them then.

When you are shopping for Christmas meals and thinking of those who are wondering how they'll have a special meal, this list will help you chose what's needed to accompany the turkey basket.

Holiday Food Wish List



Hardwick Area Food Pantry
39 W Church St Hardwick, VT
(802) 472-5940

Stuffing for turkey
Turkey gravy
Canned cranberry sauce
Potatoes, onions, and carrots
Bread mixes
Canned peas
Brown sugar
Salt
Butter
White unbleached flour
Evaporated milk
Cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, and allspice

Birthdays at ECPC

Birthdays are occasions to celebrate the gifts of life and friendship.

December

- 3 - Keith Kish
12 - Laurie Courage
13 - Dave Stoner
19 - Neil Urie
22 - Karen Midi
24 - Bob Benson
30 - Marjorie Urie

January

- 13 - Morris Rowell
18 - Fielda Calderwood
18 - Mary Quigley
27 - Charlie Kehler

Thank Offering

ECPC has a long tradition of supporting the Presbyterian Women's Thank Offering, given to express our gratitude for special blessings in our lives. It funds projects such as agricultural development, child care, community organization, criminal justice, drug counseling, economic justice, elderly care, employment training, homelessness, literacy, violence and women's concerns. At least 40 percent of this offering supports health ministries throughout the world.

Envelopes will be available for the gifts on November 23 and 30.



ALL SAINTS DAY

“What we celebrate when we celebrate All Saints is not the superhuman faith and power of a select few, but God’s ability to use flawed people to do divine things.

We celebrate the fact that God creates faith in God’s people, and those people through ordinary acts of love, bring the Kingdom of Heaven closer to Earth.

We celebrate that we have, in all who’ve gone before us, what St. Paul calls *such a great cloud of witnesses* and that the faithful departed are as much the body of Christ as we are.”
~ Nadia Bolz Weber

During worship on November 2, 2014, the congregation was invited to write the name of someone who has been a spiritual model or mentor in each of their lives, someone who has “brought the Kingdom of Heaven closer to Earth.” These are the Saints named that day:

Rev. Dr. Harry Cahill
Jim MacKellar
Dianne Carberry
Jim Ferguson

My hometown Jr. High Sunday School teacher

Huyett Sangree
Aline Newton
Andrew Urie

Effy Foley—my grandmother
George Washington Egerton
Alma Davidson
My mother
Henry H. Hurt
Mary Bailey
Dennis Hett

My mother, Helen Rowell
Bill Thompson
John Moran

Winfield Berggraaff
My mom, Ruth Schleben

Lewis Aill
Donna Lloyd
Jeff Kellam
My grandfather

Fall Book Study

The fall book study is giving a new way to consider Advent: a retrospective on the birth of Christ from Mary’s perspective. In the book, *Not a Silent Night*, Adam Hamilton asks new questions to help us consider advent. How might Mary have understood the extraordinary events surrounding her son’s birth and the life that followed, looking back on them from different points in her life? How can we understand Christ’s life better by looking at the whole picture from a new viewpoint? Using this unusual approach brings new insights to the familiar stories of Christmas.

Thanks to Alex Hurt for leading the study and to Elsie for hosting the group on Sunday evening, with a light meal and time of fellowship following the study. The study continues November 23 and December 7.

Join the Celebrations

During Advent members are invited to lead the candle lighting ceremony and on the Sunday after Christmas, volunteers are needed to read lessons as part of the Lessons and Carols service. Please let Pastor Gina know if you would like to participate. You can speak to her after church, phone her at 802-249-8389 or email her at rev.ghvo@gmail.com.

Alternative Gifts

This year, instead of creating our own Alternative Gift Catalog, we are encouraging you to use the PCUSA *Giving Catalog* to make a gift that will keep on giving. You can select gifts to help farmers in developing countries, scholarships, supplies for Young Adult Volunteers, items needed in emergencies or gifts to meet many other needs. Catalogs are available on a table at the back of the church for you to peruse. All of these gifts support mission programs of PCUSA.

With the catalog is an order form for you to note your selections. Please write the check for your gifts to East Craftsbury Presbyterian Church and we will send one check, along with all the order forms to PCUSA.

Mission Giving

An important part of the ministry of this church is our support of others through both our witness and giving. We provide financial support to the worldwide mission of the national church through the congregation's pledge to PCUSA as well as by our gifts to special offerings. In addition, each year we budget funds for specific projects with which we have personal connections, some local and others international. This year, on the recommendation of the Mission, Care and Outreach Committee, these mission funds of \$1800 will be given as follows:



Volunteers gleaning produce for Salvation Farms

low: \$250 to ECHO – where Erwin Kinsey works to assist small-scale farmers in East Africa, \$500 to Hardwick Area Food Pantry to help feed hungry neighbors, \$200 to the PNNE

Ubunye committee: our ongoing presbytery partnership in South Africa; \$250 to Salvation Farm which uses the ancient Biblical practice of gleaning crops from farms and funnels the produce to food banks in Vermont, \$200 to Craftsbury Community Care Center providing stimulating activities for elderly residents, \$200 to Presbyterian Education in Pakistan, and \$200 to a PCUSA Alternative Giving Project, yet to be selected. (see article on alternative giving).



A classroom in one of the Presbyterian schools in Pakistan

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