

Early December 2009

Advent Worship Series:

“GREATEST OF ALL GIFTS”

How God as Gift-Giver inspires our gift-giving

Fourth Sunday of Advent, Dec. 20:

“Songs and Sonnets of Christmas”

Our service will follow a similar format to the traditional lessons and carols service first developed by King’s College of Cambridge. This year, however, along with scripture readings by our members and anthems and carols sung by our choir, we have invited five poets of our congregation to write and read poetry for this occasion. We are delighted that the poets will include: Elizabeth Brooks, Brooke Justis, Linda Novak, Melissa Bancks and Judy Gurley.

Homily: “What do you really want for Christmas?” based on Luke 2:36-38 by our pastor.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service: “What Shall I Give Him?”
Thursday, Dec. 24, 5:00 pm

Using the “Little Drummer boy” theme, what shall I give the infant Jesus in this season of gift-giving? Luke 2:8-18. The service will include our lighting of the Christ Candle. Dr. Jones will share one of his favorite Christmas stories. Our choir will sing two special Christmas anthems, and there will be a time with the children.

First Sunday of Christmas, Dec. 27: “Gifts are but Symbols”

Matthew 2:1-12; Gifts, in and of themselves, have little meaning. Gifts received that seem out of relation to the giver can feel cheap, suggestive, or manipulative. Gifts are symbols of the giver. Some gifts are priceless only because of the giver. The gifts of the Wise Sages from the East was not their gold, frankincense and myrrh, but their risk in being present with the Holy Family.

SEASON OF GIFT-GIVING

For the Fourth Sunday of Advent, Dec. 20, bring gifts for the Northside Team Ministry Families

There are no Learning Community Classes held on Dec. 20 or 27. The classes resume on Sunday, Jan. 3, 2010. Please join us next Sunday at 10:30 am for worship. The Karen bus in the city will begin picking up families at the same locations at 9:15 am on Dec. 20 and 27. The bus will pick up the Karen families on Dec. 24 at 4:00 pm. The bus will resume an 8:30 am pick-up on January 3.



*Janelle & Joey
top left.
Children's
Christmas Play
Remainder of page*

*See more photos on
our FaceBook page*



Getting Into this Season...

Christmas is definitely a season you must enter into. I'm not necessarily talking of the merriment and festivities. I'm speaking of the spiritual dimension of Christmas. Indeed, because of our rushed schedules, extra parties, programs and activities, it is easy to get pushed along and never really enter into the meaning of Christmas. Christmas isn't over on Dec. 25. That's the beginning of a 12-day period of Christmas leading up to Epiphany. In other words, you still have time to...



Enter into the spiritual meaning of Christmas by:

- Engaging in advent by lighting the candles, reading the scripture, singing carols.
- Reading a book: there are wonderful Christmas books and stories.
- Spreading joy to someone you know who might feel left alone, grieving a loss, or by themselves. Why not think of someone close by and someone far away?
- Spreading joy to complete strangers: families who might not otherwise be able to enjoy their Christmas...we've done this in our support of Room at the Inn, CWS kits, Memorial food pantry, Northside Ministry family, and the coats and gloves for Burmese refugees in St. Louis. Our congregation has responded with characteristic generosity
- Finding quiet moments by yourself to meditate upon God's gift to you
- Seeing the Christmas Lights at Our Lady of Snows that tell the story of Jesus' nativity. It's not just the lights, but the crowds of people, all coming to remember the meaning of the season.
- Planning what your family will do on Christmas Eve and Day. I hope your plans might include our 5:00 pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Service, always one of my favorites. What will your family do in your home, in your prayers, your remembering, to lift up the special meaning of this season? Talk with your loved ones about what this season has meant to them. Tell stories. Share memories. Talk together about what God has done in Christ. Christmas is one opportunity for authentic conversations. Even if your family includes members who are not Christians, everyone is searching for meaning and a Christmas with only tinsel and Rudolph cannot be fully satisfying to anyone.
- Enjoying Christmas music. We've begun playing Christmas CD's around the house and it is a joyous way to enter into the festivity of this season. You can enjoy Christmas music this coming Sunday as our Second Baptist Choir and Poets offer *Songs and Sonnets of Christmas*. It will be a magnificent worship occasion. But I hardly need to tell you of all the Christmas music and plays offered throughout the St. Louis region. Those who heard the St. Louis Symphony perform *The Messiah* were inspired with the Christmas message.
- Giving a gift in honor of the Christ child. What will you give? To whom?

The most important thing is not to be passive, but intentional. Don't get sidetracked with your annoyance over being wished "Happy Holidays" rather than "Merry Christmas." Don't get angry over the commercialization of Christmas, since we all participate in that. Keep yourself focused, plan reflective time, and enjoy the special gift that God has given you: *the birth of the Christ child*. – Stephen Jones

PEOPLE NEWS

Let us keep in our prayers...

- Bill Curson had successful thyroid removal surgery at Mo Baptist Hospital on Dec. 10.
- Hari Smith struggling with back pain
- Jean Ochsner who is recuperating from a broken leg at Brooking Park Center.
- Judy Gurley, recovering from an allergic reaction, has now found an effective treatment.

Let us rejoice with...

- Madelaine Kozak who brought her mother, Sarah, to church for the first time on Dec. 13. What a beautiful baby!
- Julie Sparks and her decision to become a member of Second Baptist Church. She was given the Hand of Fellowship on Dec. 13. Joan Jensen is her new member sponsor. An article about Julie will appear in the next issue.
- The Cameron Youth Orchestra who presented a lovely holiday concert in our sanctuary to an appreciative audience.

Let us give thanks for...

- Cindy Collins and Joan Jensen for arranging the beautiful poinsettias in our sanctuary for this Christmas season.
- Linda Marks for creating and directing the children's play for the Annual Children's Christmas Dinner. Thanks to Shari Nelson Faulkner for her great work with the children's choir who performed on that night. Thanks to Judy Comfort for assisting with preparations. Thanks to Janelle Jones for purchasing the Santa gifts. Thanks to Jane Mahan who coordinated this dinner and also the Hanging of the Greens potluck dinner.
- The youth of our church who prepared, directed and presented "The Grinch Who Stole Christmas" at the Christmas Dinner.
- Joan Jensen who coordinated the decorating of the church for Hanging of the Greens.
- Mary and Jim Shepardson for coordinating the group that attended "The Messiah" at Powell Hall.
- Rick Hoyt for organizing the Hanging of the Greens.
- Thanks to all who went Christmas caroling to Bill and Millie Winter, Fred Oertli, Inez Mixon and Jean Ochsner.



Thank you to all who were able to help by making a kit for Church World Services to use for Refugees in camps and disasters around the World, including the USA. God's Blessing be with each of you and those in need.

-Mildred Shelton on behalf of, ABW

Light UP the World!

Pledged to date for 2010: \$203,350

In 2009, we pledged \$202,593. At the Budget Forum on Sunday, the congregation learned that our proposed 2010 budget is still \$15,000 out of balance. If it is possible, you are invited to re-consider your pledge for 2010 in light of this reality. If you have never pledged to Second Baptist Church, we encourage you to do so. Only through a pledge, can we build a 2010 church budget that funds our mission and our goals for the coming year.

"You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one, after lighting a lamp, puts it under a bushel, but on a lampstand and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see the good you do and praise God!" (Matthew 5:14-16)



We invite you to our Christmas Open House

Jan and Stephen Jones

Next Sunday, Dec. 20, 3:00 – 5:00 pm

Come anytime between those hours

1611 S. 11th Street (near Tucker and Lafayette)

Directions: We live within blocks of I-55, I-44, I-70 and I-64.

From northbound I-55, take the Gravois Exit. From the ramp, cross Russell, go straight onto Tucker and turn right on Lafayette (traffic light). 11th Street will be your first street on the left.

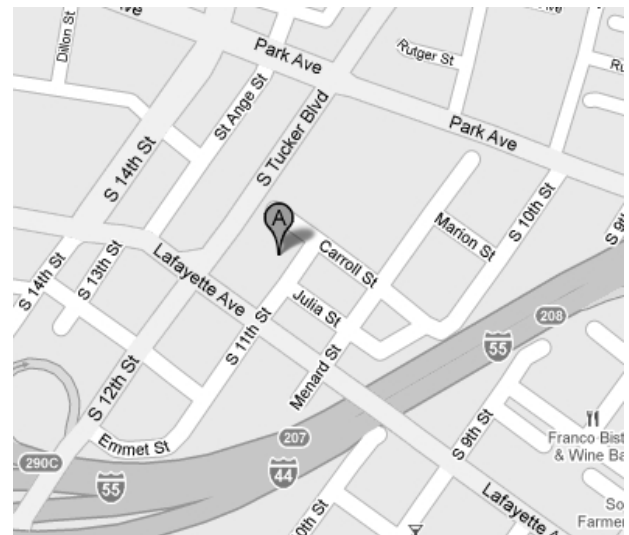
From eastbound I-44, take the Lafayette exit. Stay on Lafayette, cross Tucker and 11th is the first street on your left.

From eastbound I-70, merge onto I-55 south and take the first exit on your right, 7th Street (Souard Market), Exit 208. At bottom of ramp, turn left. Continue on 7th Street. Turn right on Lafayette and in four blocks, turn right on 11th Street.

From eastbound Highway 40 (I-64), take the 14th Street exit. At bottom of ramp, turn right on 14th. Cross over the railroad tracks and turn left on Chouteau. At Tucker, turn right. Turn left on Lafayette and left on 11th Street.

There is typically a lot of street parking around our house. It's well-lit and safe. There is also a large parking lot behind our house and you are welcome to park there and walk through our garage and enter our home from the back. (fewer steps)

If you would like to offer rides to any of our Karen families, please call the church office.



BUDGET FORUM UPDATE

One of our leaders on Church Council pointed out: “When we each sit down in our homes to make our pledges, we have no idea of the collective response of the congregation. It is difficult to know ‘our proportionate share.’” That persuaded Council to postpone adoption of the 2010 Budget until January so that we could have a Budget Forum in December allowing everyone opportunity to see the vision and to discuss our responses.

At the Forum, two challenges were discussed: one is the \$15,000 short-fall in pledges for 2010. The second is the short-fall in pledged giving for 2009. As of the end of November, we were \$17,000 behind in our pledges as a congregation. Budget expenditures are also running ahead of anticipated levels, even with a spending freeze in place the final two months on discretionary items.

As the Church Council envisioned 2010, it did so with the idea of funding a proposed part-time pastoral position. Council would like to recommend to the congregation the proposal to offer a 5-10 hour a week pastoral position to Kara Reagan, our former pastoral intern, and Kara has expressed interest. The congregation cannot consider such a proposal until we fund the 2010 Budget. If fully funded, Council hopes to present this proposal to the congregation in January.

We did apply to National Ministries of American Baptists for a second year grant for our Karen Ministries. Last year we received \$2,000. We applied for \$3,000 for 2010, all of which would go toward our 2010 budget if approved. We again rejoice that the church has received an anonymous pledge to fully fund the expenses of our church van and transporting the Karen on Sunday mornings in 2010. This is a wonderful and generous pledge outside the 2010 budget. We rejoice that the Trustees will increase their contributions from our Endowed Funds from \$28,000 in 2009 to \$36,480 in 2010.

In light of these economic times, not everyone can or should re-consider their pledge. Yet, the economy is turning, the recession appears to be ending, and perhaps a better 2010 awaits us all. If possible, one outcome of the budget forum was to invite members and friends of Second Baptist Church to re-pledge. If you do not pledge to the church, it is the best way to ensure that your giving is considered as we adopt a 2010 budget.

Many people at the forum described our situation as a “good problem.” Over the past two years, we have grown in membership, grown in worship attendance, grown in mission outreach, grown in church programming, and we have done all this in the midst of the most severe economic recession since the Great Depression. Average worship attendance in November, 2009 was 117. In 2008, it was 100, and in 2007 it was 75.

	2010 <i>(to date)</i>	2009	2008	2007
Number of Pledges:	55	55	48	39
Amount Pledged:	\$203,354	\$202,594	\$190,085	\$164,398
Total Projected Income:	\$256,155			
Total Budget:	\$270,913	\$246,844	\$243,446	\$206,480

We need \$14,758 in additional pledges to balance the 2010 proposed budget.

Thank You's For Our Giving...

- 1. Our November communion offering came to nearly \$300 and with this we went to area thrift shops and purchased many winter coats for students at International Welcome School, a St Louis city school for new immigrants. We received a special thank you note from Maria Childress, social worker at the school.*
- 2. We received a thank you note from Rev. Margie Pride of Memorial Christian Church for our generous response to re-supply their food pantry for Thanksgiving week.*
- 3. We received a thank you from Sister Stephanie of Room at the Inn for the outpouring of supplies we gave to this homeless ministry for families.*
- 4. Our September communion offering raised enough funds to build a new dormitory at the Mae La Refugee Camp. We received this note from Saw Po, director of the Mae Plae Toe Dormitory: "Dear friends of Second Baptist Church: We heartily thank you for your precious gifts. We praise and thank God who touched your hearts kindly to share his blessing with our Mae Plae Toe Dormitory and our Karen People. We pray for your families, coworkers, and every good effort of your church in the name of Jesus Christ. The students who live in the dormitory were persecuted and forced to be soldiers by an army under the control of the Burmese military government. On 11/11/07, a young boy entered our camp and said to me, 'I am very afraid to go back to my village. I want to study here. I have many friends in the Karen State who are in my same situation.' At the time, I didn't know what I could do for these young people except to pray to God to open a way of blessing for them. Today, we have 34 students in the dormitory, and expect that to increase to 50 students in 2010. Your gifts allowed us to rebuild a dormitory for these students. God be with you forever. Saw Po."*



The next issue of our church's newsletter, *The New Outlook*, will come out the week of December 28.

The Youth Group of Second Baptist Church meets next on Friday, Dec. 18 for a Christmas Party at the church.

January 12, 2010
The Moon Flower Vine,
by J. Carelton



Please cut and return by mail, drop in the collection plate or email the office at office@2ndbc.org.

Financial Re-Pledge for 2010

In light of the anticipated short-fall for 2010, I/we wish to re-pledge the following amount instead of the pledge made earlier:

My new pledge for 2010 for the entire year: \$_____

I will give this pledge to the church ___ weekly ___ monthly ___ other: _____

Name: _____

Let us Light Up the World with our Generosity!