

~The Weary Road~

*“And ye, beneath life’s crushing load, whose forms are bending low, who toil along the climbing way
with painful steps and slow: Look now! For glad and golden hours come swiftly on the wing.*

O rest beside the weary road, and hear the angels sing.”

~It Came Upon a Midnight Clear

Dear Friends,

Edmund Sears’ famous Christmas carol, “It Came Upon a Midnight Clear,” was written both as a celebration of Jesus’ birth and as an outcry against slavery. Sears was a Unitarian minister in Massachusetts, and he wrote his heartfelt words in 1849 at a time when the abolitionist movement was sweeping across the North and dividing Christians bitterly. Congregationalists and Presbyterians were especially active in the struggle to end slavery. Nevertheless, some leading theologians of the day—including the famous Charles Hodge of Princeton Seminary—believed that to attack the institution of slavery was to attack the authority of the Scriptures. (After all, didn’t the Apostle Paul command slaves to be obedient to their masters?) It’s hard to believe that there was a time in this country, even in northern Presbyterian circles, when raising your voice against slavery could get you branded a theological liberal!

For Sears, and many others, the coming of Jesus was not only meant to bring us personal salvation; it was also meant for the salvation of human society: freedom for slaves, equality for women, fair treatment for laborers, and an end to child labor. Sears believed that Jesus’ words and way of life would hold a mirror up to society, showing us all that needed to be changed. Just listen to the third verse of Sears’ carol:

*Yet with the woes of sin and strife
The world has suffered long;
Beneath the angel-strain have rolled
Two thousand years of wrong;
And man, at war with man, hears not
The love-song which they bring;
O hush the noise, ye men of strife,
And hear the angels sing.*

I’ve never seen that poignant verse included in any modern hymnal. I’ve never heard it sung. And yet, if the angels, and the shepherds, and the star above the manger have any message at all, it is this! After the babe in the manger grew up, he declared in his very first sermon: “I have been sent to proclaim good news to the poor; release to the captives; liberty to those who are oppressed” (Luke 4:18, quoting Isaiah 61:1).

And so, have yourself a merry little Christmas. Enjoy the music, and the feasting, and the family gatherings, and the gifts, and the rich nostalgia of the season. I hope you will take some time to “rest beside the weary road” of your life “to hear the angels sing.” But never forget that the baby Jesus is more than just a pretty picture. He has come to upset the apple carts of injustice. And he expects his followers to do the same.

Christmas Blessings,

~Brian

COMMUNITY NOTES

Want to be included on this page? Submissions are due the 15th of every month for the next month's publication. 412-561-4114 or office@bhccml.com

COFFEE HOUR TO HONOR FAITHFUL USHERS

Please plan to join the Worship & Music Committee at Coffee Hour on December 4, when we honor ushers who have served Bower Hill Church for over 20 years. Jim Corbett (20 years) and Earl Kennedy (37 years) are retiring at the end of the year. Bob Bridges has served more than 20 years, as has Bob Winnett. Both Bobs will be continuing their service. Be sure to talk with these faithful servants and thank them for their dedication.

NEW CHOIR ROBES: THANK YOU, MARY LOU!

On the first Sunday in Advent, the Handbell and Chancel Choirs debuted brand new robes! These robes were generously given in memory of Paul Frock by his loving wife, Mary Lou. Both Mary Lou and Paul gave their time and talents to the Chancel Choir for years. Both choirs are thrilled about the new robes, and are ever thankful for the gift from Mary Lou.

FOODBANK STILL NEEDS YOU!

On Sunday, December 11, we will have our regular collection for the Wallace Food Pantry. High-protein foods like peanut butter and tuna, baby items of all types (diapers, formula, food), are always deeply appreciated. The foodbank requests dessert items for Holiday food baskets. Please include everything required to make the dessert, such as both cake mix and icing.

SENIOR MEN'S GROUP: FIRST WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH

The next meetings of the Senior Men's Breakfast will be on Wednesday, December 7, and Wednesday, January 4. The group convenes at 8:00 a.m. at Kings Restaurant on Rte. 50, Washington Pike near the end of Greentree Road, in Scott. The meeting day will continue to be the first Wednesday of each month until next April. We normally have eight to twelve men attend. There is no agenda other than good fellowship and interesting conversation. No invitation or reservation is needed. We meet in the room to the left of the cashier.

POINSETTIAS FOR SALE

Christmas flowers will be \$9 this year, with proceeds supporting the Youth Work Trip. Order forms are available both in this issue of the newsletter and on the tables in the church Narthex. They may be returned to the office or placed in the offering plate. Money will also be collected by a volunteer after church on December 4 and 11.



PARISH LIFE MEETING: NEW MEMBERS WELCOME

The Parish Life Committee will meet in Room 103 on Sunday, December 11, following worship. Any and all are welcome to join.

DECEMBER 3RD: SNYDER'S 2ND ANNUAL CHRISTMAS OPEN HOUSE

As last year, all are invited to 3524 Washington Pike, Bridgeville, PA for drinks, appetizers and good conversation. Come and go anytime between 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. to kick off the Christmas season together.

SENIOR CHAT AT PANERA

Join other BHCC Seniors for conversation and company at Panera Bread in the Galleria Shopping Mall on Tuesday, December 13, at 10:00 a.m.

January 14: Game Night

February 25: Seven Springs ski trip (day trip)

The Parish Life Committee would like to extend a **BIG THANK YOU** to the hosts of the Progressive Dinner: the Bruder, Lease, Geis, Rising and Hicks Families!

FIBER GROUP TAKES OFF, NEW TIMES!

Starting January 7th, the Hooks & Needles group will be meeting twice a month on the first and third Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. to Noon. Sandi Solomon will be the coordinator and will offer her past teaching experience to those who would like to learn or need some help. If you are already a "needler" just come and enjoy the camaraderie of fellow adult needlers..... If you have any questions, Sandi can be reached at goldilox67@yahoo.com or 412-276-3019 after 7:00 p.m. weekdays. Please reference BHCC Needlers in your subject line if you email her.



A lot has happened since our last Haiti Project update. Rick Jacobs traveled to Haiti in October with a team of 11 people from six different states, to install two water purification systems at orphanages operated by the Global Orphan Project. The two orphanages were literally at the end of paths leading from the main roads into the mountains. The group had to drive through rivers (no bridges on the paths) to reach the sites. Leaving the airport in Port Au Prince, it quickly became obvious that they were in the poorest country in the Western hemisphere. Everywhere there were refugees still living in tents erected after the earthquake. It was very hot, crowded and dirty. There is no garbage pickup in Haiti, so trash just piles up – on the roadsides, in the waterways and in the camps. And when it rains, everything floods and the rainwater washes the garbage and human waste into the ditches, streams, rivers and ultimately into the water supply. It's no wonder that 5% of the Haitian population has contracted cholera or that one child in ten dies before reaching their 5th birthday. The need for safe drinking water is truly overwhelming.

The trip was a success, despite many travel and logistical difficulties, and now the two orphanages and their surrounding communities have water systems capable of supplying clean drinking water for more than 2000 people in each location.

During the trip, Rick identified a site where our Bower Hill team can install a water system. It is the rectory of an Episcopal parish priest named Pere' Alphonse, who is responsible for several churches and a school in the small town of Torbeck, near the city of Les Cayes. Pere' Alphonse has a well on the property that is contaminated with bacteria and pathogens (Rick tested the water). He would like to use the

water to supply his churches and the community with safe drinking water. So Rick and a representative from First Presbyterian Church in Oklahoma City started a conversation about installing a water purification system there. This site is attractive because it has been designated to receive a grant of \$10,000 from Solar Under the Sun (SUS) for installation of a solar-powered water system.

Between the SUS grant and the funding promised by Pittsburgh Presbytery, we have already identified \$19,000 in potential funding for the project. In addition, we have raised more than \$2,500 from private donations and sales of Christmas and note cards. We have also been in contact with Bethel-St. Clair Rotary and with other churches that might be willing to support our project including Westminster Presbyterian, First Presbyterian in Oklahoma City and St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal in Mission, KS. Our target is \$40,000 and we are well on the way.

In early November, our team met with Karen Battle from Presbytery and members from East Union Presbyterian, who have also attended LWW training. We spent the evening sharing information.

Next steps include continuing to raise funds (we welcome anyone's ideas or donations), traveling to Haiti in February to negotiate a covenant with Pere' Alphonse, and team members Rich Salvante and Karl Casey attending solar training in May.

We would love the opportunity to discuss the Haiti Water Project with you, just ask! There are opportunities to get involved! We continually thank you for your support.

Rick Jacobs and Darendra Lease

Support this project with the purchase of Cards!

The note cards are packaged in groups of eight, including two each of four scenes celebrating all four seasons, which cost \$12.00 per package.

The Christmas cards are packaged in groups of ten and cost \$15.00. Each package contains the same scene, and there are two choices. Contact the office for more information!



MEMORIAL FUND GIFTS

Gifts of money are made in memory of a loved one. The church retains these in a special fund to be used at a later date as a thoughtful and meaningful memorial to the deceased. Families of the deceased are encouraged to choose a memorial enhancing the ministry of the church, either in the form of an item of value or a program which directly nurtures the well being and/or faith development of the congregation. A mission program of BHCC may also be designated.

It is especially nice when gifts are chosen that echo the passions of the person in whose name they are given. For example, Paul Frock was a faithful choir member, so memorial gifts in his name are being used to purchase new choir robes. Gifts in memory of Diane Leeson were designated to the Haiti Water Project. Diane had volunteered for many mission projects at Bower Hill, especially those involving children. She had also been a participant in Koinonia, the group organizing the Haiti Water Project.

Over the years many substantial gifts have been given. These are listed in the Memorial Book found in the Narthex.

DECEMBER WORSHIP PLANS

12/4: 2nd Sunday of Advent, Communion
Mark 1:1-8 and Isaiah 40:1-11

12/11: 3rd Sunday of Advent
"Repeat the Sounding Joy:
A Service of Worship Through Music"
Luke 1:26-38 and Luke 1:39-56

**12/18: 4th Sunday of Advent,
The Children's Nativity Pageant**
Luke 2 and Matthew 2, assorted verses

**12/24: Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
with Holy Communion**
Music: 6:30 p.m., Worship: 7:00 p.m.
Luke 2:1-20

12/25: Christmas Day
Isaiah 9:2-7

LECTORS

Dec. 4: Susan Shira Nilsen

Dec. 11: Michelle Snyder

Dec. 18: Rich Salvante

GREETERS

Dec. 4: Phil & Linda Johnson, Lucille Heckman

Dec. 11: Shelly & Dave Saba, Chan Ketchum

Dec. 18: Jennifer & Bob Foster, Josie Sheldon

Dec. 25: Rev. John & Phyllis Yohe, Bill Cadwell

COMMUNION SERVERS

Kiri & Jason Rising, Tim & Darena Lease, Choir: Phyllis Yohe, Joan Zakor

ACOLYTES

Dec. 4: Todd Westerhoff, Ellie Rising

Dec. 11: Sydney Saba, Lindsay Bruder

Dec. 18: Evie Harris, Graceann Foster

ADULT EDUCATION: ADVENT SERIES DRAWN FROM "LIVING THE QUESTION" VIDEOS

Adult education during Advent will explore three programs from the "Living the Question" video series providing a contemporary viewpoint on theology and scriptures. Pastor Brian Snyder has led previous discussions from the series and will preside at the first of the Advent discussions on Sunday, December 4, on the topic of "Reincarnation." On Sunday, December 11, the subject is "Restoring Relationships." Discussion on Sunday, December 18, will be "Embracing Mystery."

Adult education sessions are held in the church library at 10:45 a.m. each Sunday unless otherwise announced.

There will be no adult education program on December 25 and January 1. Dave Green is chair of the adult education committee. Phone 412-531-2205.

Email davegreenpgh@aol.com.

CHRISTMAS PAGEANT REHEARSAL SCHEDULE

Participants in the 2011 Christmas pageant are asked to participate in rehearsal on the following days:

December 4:
10:45 a.m. in the Sanctuary

December 11:
10:45 a.m. in the Sanctuary

December 17:
9:00 a.m. in the Sanctuary

**ADVENT IN THE CHAPEL**

What are you waiting for?

What dreams and hopes do you entertain when nobody is looking? Everyone knows what it is to wait, and everyone knows what it is to long for things that aren't. That's why the Christian tradition has Advent, a whole season dedicated to waiting, and hoping, and longing, and dreaming.

Come celebrate this season with us every Thursday evening in December (except 12/29) from 7:15 until 8:00 p.m. in the chapel.

Our Advent evenings are a blend of casual worship, Bible study, and fellowship.

Our four weekly themes will be waiting, hoping, longing, and dreaming. Park in the South Parking Lot and enter the chapel through the Memorial Garden. Childcare will be provided in the Noah's Ark Sunday school room.



MUSIC NOTES BY JESSICA BAIER

je@bhccml.com

Office Hours

Sunday: 7:00 a.m. -1:00 p.m.
Monday: 10:00 a.m. -3:00 p.m.
Wednesday: 10:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
 and 4:30 p.m. -9:00 p.m.

The BHCC Handbell Choir will give a Holiday concert at Concordia of the South Hills on Wednesday, December 7, at 7:00 p.m. Please come to support our choir as we perform some holiday favorites, including *Carol of the Bells*, *Let There Be Peace on Earth*, and a medley of secular songs.

On December 11, we will be having our second annual *Repeat the Sounding Joy: A Service of Worship Through Music*. The Handbell and Chancel Choirs will be sharing music throughout this service.

Come at 6:30 p.m. on Christmas Eve for a Carol Sing! On the two Sundays before Christmas, you will find an insert in your bulletin with a list of Christmas Carols. Circle your favorite Carol, and we will sing it on Christmas Eve. Then, stay to hear special music performed by instrumentalists and vocalists from our own congregation, starting at 6:45 p.m.

T H R E E R I V E R S R I N G E R S

The Three Rivers Ringers will perform at Bower Hill Community Church on Friday, December 9, at 8:00 p.m.

Enjoy the magical sound of handbells playing your favorite holiday tunes, including *Sleigh Ride*, *Deck the Halls*, *Silent Night*, and many more.

The concert will include a suite of amazing pieces written by the late Betty Garee, plus our take on Elvis's favorite Christmas tune, as well as the premiere of Andy Seay's transcription of Giuseppe Verdi's *Ave Maria*.

Please join us for this memorable concert – it's the perfect way to "ring" in the holiday season!



Youth Director Chelsea Leitcher

ch@bhccml.com

**Office Hours: MONDAY
11:00 a.m.—4:00 p.m.**

The BHCC Youth Group has been having a wonderful fall and we continue to be thankful and blessed by everyone's ongoing support. We are continuing our bible study of Matthew leading into the Advent season and are in the concluding weeks of the wreath sale to support the youth work trip. In December the youth will be assembling and setting up the luminaries for the Christmas Eve service and will be volunteering with Produce to People. We wish all of you a Merry Christmas and we are grateful for God's blessings on the closing year.



**LOOK
WHO WAS
BORN
THIS MONTH**

THE BIRTHDAY BLESSING is changing. Instead of inviting you to the front of the church on the month when your birthday is celebrated, we will list your name in the first worship bulletin of that month and in the monthly newsletter.

Please take a moment to read through the names, pray for them, and offer them your best wishes! If your name is not listed, it is because the church office does not have your information.

- Dec. 03: Katie Philson, Marge Beatty
- Dec. 05: Noah Eliason
- Dec. 06: Joan McAnulty, Steve Boisvert
- Dec. 07: Bill Andrews, Richard Salvante
- Dec. 08: Sophie Hicks
- Dec. 10: Kathy Philson, Christine Henney
- Dec. 11: Jason Robosky
- Dec. 14: Betsy Prine, Tim May, Leo Geis
- Dec. 19: Martha Van Horn, Dwayne Fielder
- Dec. 22: Beth Gardner
- Dec. 28: Catherine Good
- Dec: 31: Kurt Kerner, Betsy Hohlfelder

*Please call 412-561-4114
with additions or corrections.*



**PLEASE WELCOME
OUR NEWEST MEMBERS!**

Karl Casey recently joined BHCC. He moved here from Southside/Pittsburgh. Karl is a hairstylist at Caruso Hair and Esthetics, Bethel Park. His hobbies are gardening and cooking. Karl resides with his partner, Daniel Duffy, in Mt. Lebanon.

Jason and Beth Robosky reside in Greentree. They both enjoy traveling. Jason also enjoys hiking and playing the saxophone. Beth is a social worker at Allegheny General Hospital and Jason is a biochemical engineer at FLIR Systems.

Ryan Kelley resides in Dormont with his daughter Grace Kelley-Tray, who turns 3 in January. Ryan moved into our area from Cleveland, OH. He mentioned that he has known Jessica Baier, our Director of Music Ministries, for almost 25 years. His hobbies/interests are hiking, biking, whitewater rafting, camping, but most importantly, being a great dad. Ryan works as an IT helpdesk support analyst at UPMC.



FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Included in the box of pledge envelopes you recently received as part of the stewardship campaign is a blue envelope marked "Per Capita Apportionment." This is an assessment levied annually on Bower Hill Church to

support the functions of the presbytery, the synod and the General Assembly. While we pledge as a family unit, the per capita apportionment is allocated on an individual basis. The single blue envelope is provided as a convenient way of offering the per capita apportionment for all the members of your family who are also members of the church.

Our church must pay the full amount of the assessment. Your contribution is based upon the number of members in your family on the church's active roll (this does not include non-member children). For 2011, our per capita assessment is \$6,419, but we have only received \$2,232 to date. The difference must be paid from our Operating Budget, which decreases the funds available to support the functions of Bower Hill Church and carry out its mission. Many of you have regularly paid the per capita assessment for each communicant member of your family and we thank you for your support. We ask those who have not done so in the past to make the designated contribution so that the church can address this obligation with minimum impact on the Operating Budget.

The Finance and Stewardship Committee



FROM THE BUILDING AND GROUNDS COMMITTEE

Sanctuary Windows

Recently, we have had to repair five Pella sanctuary windows in the amount \$5,936 because of weather and alignment problems. We had the other windows in the sanctuary inspected and feel comfortable that they are in good repair.

Duquesne Light Rebate Program

To date we have replaced approximately 90 high efficient energy fluorescent light fixtures throughout the church. We still have that many more to do in the DART area and the rooms below. In addition to the fixtures, we are in the process of installing new ballasts and approximately 330 new high-efficiency fluorescent bulbs throughout the church. We will also be replacing all of the exit signs in the church. Duquesne Light Company offers this rebate program and we are realizing approximately 40% discount rebates on all fixtures and bulbs. We are also experiencing a reduction in our monthly electric bill.

Church Steeple

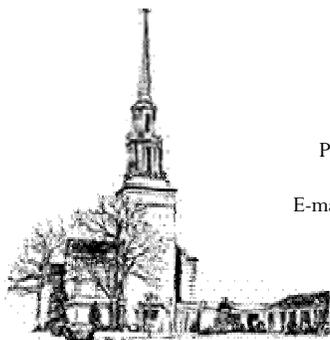
With the wind damage and excessive wear and tear, the Building and Grounds Committee is reviewing bids to repair the steeple with non-wood products so we will only have minimal maintenance for the steeple in the future. Our first bid came back from the contractor in the amount of \$190,000. We have also received a second bid in the amount of \$150,000, eliminating some of the ornate architectural elements outlined in the first bid. The committee is working diligently on finalizing the necessary costs to repair and maintain the steeple. We are also working with other members in the church who have some knowledge and expertise in this area, such as architects and engineers.

If you have any input on this matter, please direct your comments to Lynn Foltz, Mary Good, Dave Hicks, Tim Lease or Bill Andrews. Thank you.

BOWER HILL COMMUNITY CHURCH

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

70 Moffett Street
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OUR CHURCH STAFF

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Rev. Grafton Eliason
Rev. Susan Shira Nilsen
Rev. Betty Sykes
Rev. Calvin C. Wilson
Rev. John Yohe

Jessica Baier, Director of Music Ministries
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Chelsea Leitcher, Youth Director
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Dianne Scott, Financial Secretary
di@bhccml.com

Emily Kerr, Office Administrator
em@bhccml.com

Jim Askins, Custodian

THE CHURCH OFFICE

[412] 561-4114

Monday - Friday 9:00 a.m.— 2:30 p.m.

PLEASE PRAY FOR OUR CARE LIST

Margie Beatty, 1300 Bower Hill Rd., Pittsburgh, PA 15243

Peggy Craig, 714 Bower Hill Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15243

Matt Dunfee, 966 Worthington Woods Blvd, Worthington, OH, 43085

Ethel La Barbera, 50 Vanadium Road, #130, Bridgeville, PA 15017

Velma Noonan, 50 Vanadium Road, #1119, Bridgeville, PA 15017

Jeanne Olsen, 1001 Ajay Drive, South Park, PA 15129

Barbara Prunchak, c/o Crestwood Commons, 100 Crestwood Court #223, Wheatfield, NY 14304

Tooie Sharkey, Asbury Place, 760 Bower Hill Rd, Pittsburgh, PA 15243