

# **The SPIRE**

**Park Avenue Congregational Church**

The United Church of Christ

**Arlington, Massachusetts**

The Rev. Dr. William Albright, Pastor

December, 2008

## *Celebrate Christmas with us*

<i>Christmas Concert and Carol Sing</i>	Sunday, December 7 4:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary
<i>Living Nativity at Overlook Farm</i>	Saturday, December 13 meet at 1:00 p.m. at church
<i>Christmas Pageant during worship service</i>	Sunday, December 14 10:00 a.m. in the Sanctuary
<i>Women's Guild Holiday Program</i>	Thursday, December 18 10:00 a.m. in the Chapel
<i>Christmas Eve Worship</i>	Wednesday, December 24
Family-oriented service followed by birthday cake for Jesus	4:00 p.m.
Candlelight service with Holy Communion	10:00 p.m.

### **Election of the Council of Deacons for 2009**

The following people have been elected to and have accepted positions on the Council of Deacons for 2009-2010: Margaret Bell, Hong Chin, Anita Clarke, Lauren Evans, Gary Kane, Doug Record, and Mike Rich. Returning members whose terms run through 2009 are Valerie Censabella, Don Cohn, Linda Cohn, Karen Friedman, Beverly Miller, Jeff Steinheider, Barbara Wagner, and Jeanne Woodin.

## Christian Education News

**Children's Sabbath:** Thank you to everyone who donated supplies for the girls at Germaine Lawrence! Sunday School children sorted the supplies and we delivered lots of toiletries, hair supplies, make up and lots of other good thing to Germaine Lawrence.

**Christmas Pageant:** Our Christmas pageant will be December 14 during the worship service. We will have one rehearsal with all kids on Saturday, December 13 from 9:30 to 11. Please make every effort to be at this rehearsal and let Andy or Kate know by December 6 if you will not be able to come.

**Living Nativity at Heifer Overlook Farm:** There will be a living nativity at the Heifer Overlook Farm in Rutland on December 13 and 14. The nativity is a short, simple play with actors and live animals from the Heifer Farm. Last year a group of us went and had a great time. We had a sleigh ride and hot chocolate and cookies in the barn after the nativity. If you'd like to go with a group from PACC, we'll meet at church on Saturday, December 13 at 1:00. It takes about 45 minutes to get to Rutland. We can carpool or caravan. Admission is free, but each group is asked to bring a plate of cookies to share. Please let me know if you are interested in going.

**Advent:** Advent materials will be sent home with Sunday School children from the Advent workshop on November 30 and will also be available in the table on the narthex. Materials for adults are also available on the table in the narthex.

**Sunday School:** There will be no Sunday School on December 28. I'll have some stories and a craft activity in the chapel for kids.

Wishing everyone a happy and healthy Christmas season,

*Kate*

### **Sarah's Circle to discuss *Amish Grace***

Sarah's Circle women's book group will meet on Saturday, December 13, from 10 a.m. until 12 noon in the Fireplace Room. The topic will be *Amish Grace: How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy* by Donald B. Kraybill, Steven M. Nolt, and David L. Weaver-Zercher. When a gunman killed five Amish children and injured five others last fall in a Pennsylvania schoolhouse, media attention rapidly turned from the tragic events to the extraordinary forgiveness demonstrated by the Amish community. The authors establish that forgiveness is embedded in Amish society, grounded in the belief that it is required by the New Testament. They distinguish between forgiveness, pardon and reconciliation, and analyze the extent to which this example can be applied elsewhere. Those who wish to meditate should come at 9:30 a.m. Questions? Speak with Merrith Sabo-Jones.

## **Summary of 2008 All-Church Evaluation Survey**

Again this spring an all-church evaluation survey was sent to members and friends of PACC in an effort to identify areas of our church life that we need to improve and over time see whether our attempts at improvement are successful. Forty-three responses were returned and tabulated. This year, as was true in previous years, the overall response showed reasonable satisfaction with everything. This was true for all categories.

For each question answers ranged from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied), with some people leaving the question blank or indicating no opinion. We looked at mean scores for each question. A score of 4.50, for example, indicates that the mean (or average) score on that question was halfway between 4 and 5. All of the questions on the survey had mean scores that were in the positive range. Almost all of the questions had mean scores between 4 and 5. As has been true in the past, people were overall well pleased with the work of our minister and other staff members, and there were many positive comments about our staff members and about various aspects of our church program. Our staff members, as well as the members of the Council of Deacons, have received detailed reports on the mean scores of the questions that applied to their work and on the comments people made.

Each year there are a few questions for which the mean scores are slightly lower than 4. In the four years that we have done this survey some of these same questions consistently have the lowest mean scores. The mean scores on these questions are not worryingly low, but they do identify for us some areas that we need to think about. The questions that had the lowest mean scores were about our financial support of the church budget (3.67), our management of invested funds (3.68), the length of the worship service (3.71), inquiries concerning absentees (3.87), and the passing of the peace (3.98). Some of these represent areas where we know we have work to do as a church. Two of them, the length of the worship service and the passing of the peace, are topics about which there are differences of opinion in our congregation. It is hard to please everyone, when people have very different ideas of what they would like to see done. For the passing of the peace, there were comments to the effect that it is now better placed in the service.

Other questions with mean scores that were on the lower side, but still greater than four, show that we need to think together as a church about such things as enlisting new church members, support of U.C.C. outreach activities, getting people's ideas about types of church music they like, and evaluating how our new organizational structure is working.

If you have questions about any aspects of this survey or would like more detail about the results, please speak with Linda Cohn or any member of the Council of Deacons.

## **Capital Campaign update**

After an initial meeting after church on November 23, the discussion of our priorities for the upcoming Capital Campaign will continue through December. If you did not receive a copy of the list of potential projects, call the office. All of us need to familiarize ourselves with the projects that have been suggested to improve our facilities, which include organ restoration, a plan to make the downstairs accessible from the sanctuary level, renovating the chapel to make a comfortable, accessible space for meeting and classes, and improvements to the parish hall. The drawings and plans for these projects will be available each week at coffee hour, and the members of the Capital Campaign Planning Committee (Edith Burge, Linda Cohn, Christie Getto Young, Gary Kane, Meredythe Schober, Keith Truesdale) are happy to answer questions and discuss the projects. During January we need to decide as a congregation what our priorities are for projects to include in the campaign, and by about the end of January we will vote on whether to hold the Capital Campaign in the spring.

## **Got Space?**

Often people move or clean out their houses during the course of the year and have some nice items to donate to the rummage sale. But if this occurs during any month other than April, they are often unable or unwilling to store things until such time as they can be brought to the church. What to do. Over the years we have tried to tuck things in various corners around the church or someone has graciously agreed to store things for several months, but we are looking for a better solution. Do you have any unused space around your house where storing bags and boxes of rummage would not be too intrusive? It would need to be clean, dry and fairly easily accessible. If you are the owner of such space and are agreeable to the prospect of storing items for the sale, please contact the church office. Thank you. We could really increase the quantity and quality of what we are able to sell if we could have an ongoing collection all year long.

## **A big thank you**

A big thank you to everyone who helped to make our PACC fair a success again this year, whether it was by making items to sell, preparing or serving food, working at a table, setting up before the fair or cleaning up afterwards, or by buying cookies or dinner or something at the silent auction!

Clamoring over the hills and dales  
Came the adorable creatures with  
Such little tails.  
They were scurrying on toward the  
Fair of fame  
Where gathering together was truly  
Their aim.  
They realized the folk who were making  
Things perk  
Were sharing their talent which helped  
The church work.  
The task was enormous and endless  
As time  
But with faith, hope and caring  
We really did fine.  
We can't be content to stand by and sigh  
And not offer compassion to those who  
Pass by  
So you came out and helped with  
All of the plans  
And we'll all spread the "Good News"  
O'er sea and o'er land.

-- Sue Erickson

I want to thank everyone who made it possible for the Cookie Walk Table to do so well at the Fair. I could not do the job alone. You all provided a HUGE variety and number of cookies; surpassing other years. I have absolutely wonderful help every year, and we came close to selling out. We had enough left over to provide two plates of cookies for the Canaday Memorial service reception, as well as enough for the Sunday Coffee Hour. Thank you so very much.

-- Connie Dugan

A heartfelt Thank You to all who worked all year in the Craft Group and then helped set up and man our table at the Fair. It proved to be very successful despite the economy. We had a fun time all year – including one day we (13 of us) went out for a delicious lunch at the Rusty Scupper in Acton. If anyone is interested in joining us: It meets two Thursdays a month. Again, many Thanks.

-- Doris Wilson

## **Bill Albright will speak to Guild December 18**

Christmas will be the theme when Women's Guild meets on Thursday, December 18. All women are cordially invited to come to the Chapel at 10:00 a.m. for refreshments followed by a program by our minister, Bill Albright.

## Mission and Justice News

**City Mission Society Christmas Shops:** PACC is one of many churches and other organizations which help to stock a shop where families who cannot afford to purchase gifts for Christmas may go to select a few items. Please bring NEW, unwrapped gifts to church by December 7. Suggestions include warm clothing (especially large sizes), toys, games, books and gift cards.

**Adopt a Family:** We will also participate in Adopt-A-Family, a program whereby you can sign up in the Parish Hall after church to shop for gifts for anonymous family members of families involved with Arlington's Social Services. Cash and check donations (made out to PACC) are also welcomed. Collection of the wrapped gifts will be December 7th and 14th.

**Thanks for your generosity.** PACC donated to the Neighbors in Need collection and to UNICEF.

**Sacred Conversations on Race:** The election of Barack Obama as our next president is an historical event in American history. While that event takes a step towards healing the wounds caused to all when racism, bigotry, alienation or misunderstanding is at hand, that one event does not eliminate centuries of living through what one experiences when one is not allowed to be part of the majority/mainstream. We will take a break during the holiday season but will be back in January 2009 with more "conversations". We will keep you informed and hope you'll join us as we go forward. Questions or comments, please contact one of the tri-organizers, Jill Lewis, Kate Lindheim, and Mike Rich.

**Arlington Food Pantry Volunteer, Marjory Johnson, honored:** The town Selectmen issued a Proclamation recently declaring December 12 Marge Johnson Service Day. Marjory and her husband, Warren, have been inspiring leaders of the town's food pantry for over a decade. Warren donated a \$1000 check to the pantry in his wife's honor, and is hoping others will step forward to contribute non-perishable food items or money for the increasingly tough times that folks are facing. Marjory lost her battle with cancer this past July.

**Freerice:** A couple of PACC members recommend that you check out the web site [freerice.com](http://freerice.com). Basically, by correctly answering multiple-choice questions in any number of fields, a person can earn a donation of rice to people in need. The donations are made by sponsors, whose logos are very unobtrusive. They learned about this through Heifer Project. Those who have been using the site have not noticed any increase in junk email and report that it is fun, educational and helpful.

## Office hours in December

The church office will be open limited hours the first week of December. It will be closed December 25, 26 and January 1. On the other days during the holiday week office hours may be reduced. Please call ahead if you need to get into the building any of those days.

### *What's Happening at PACC*

Wed.	Dec. 3	7:30 p.m.	Evening Bible Group in the Fireplace Room
Thu.	Dec. 4	10:00 a.m.	Women's Coffee in the Chapel
		7:30 p.m.	Choir rehearsal in the Nicoll Room
Sun.	Dec. 7	10:00 a.m.	Worship service includes Communion
		11:30 a.m.	Coffee Hour in the Parish Hall
		11:45 a.m.	Youth Choir rehearsal in the Nicoll Room
		4:00 p.m.	Christmas concert in the Sanctuary Reception in Parish Hall
Mon.	Dec. 8	7:30 p.m.	Council of Deacons in the Nicoll Room
Tue.	Dec. 9	7:30 p.m.	PACC-Men in the Fireplace Room
Wed.	Dec. 10	10:00 a.m.	Staff meeting in the Fireplace Room
		7:30 p.m.	Evening Bible Group in the Fireplace Room
Sat.	Dec. 13	9:30 a.m.	Pageant rehearsal in the Sanctuary
		9:30 a.m.	Sarah's Circle in the Fireplace Room
		1:00 p.m.	Meet at church to go to Living Nativity
Sun.	Dec. 14	10:00 a.m.	Worship service includes Christmas Pageant
		11:15 a.m.	Coffee Hour in the Parish Hall
Tue.	Dec. 16	1:30 p.m.	Bible Study at Sunrise Assisted Living Center
Thu.	Dec. 18	10:00 a.m.	Women's Guild in the Chapel
		7:30 p.m.	Choir rehearsal in the Nicoll Room
Sun.	Dec. 21	9:20 a.m.	Youth Choir rehearsal in the Sanctuary
		10:00 a.m.	Worship service
		11:15 a.m.	Communion in the Sanctuary
		11:15 a.m.	Coffee Hour in the Parish Hall
Wed.	Dec. 24	4:00 p.m.	Family Christmas Eve Worship Service
		10:00 p.m.	Christmas Eve Worship with Choir and Communion
Thu.	Dec. 25		<i>Christmas Day</i> ; office closed
Fri.	Dec. 26		Office closed
Sun.	Dec. 28	10:00 a.m.	Worship service; combined Sunday School classes
		11:15 a.m.	Coffee Hour in the Parish Hall
Mon.	Dec. 29		Deadline for January <i>Spire</i>

### *coming later in the year*

Mon.	Jan. 5		Annual reports due
Sat.	Jan. 10	all day	Capital Campaign feasibility discussions
- Sun.	Jan. 11	afternoon	Capital Campaign feasibility discussions
Sun.	Jan. 25	12:00 noon	Annual Meeting of Park Avenue Congregational Church
Sun.	Feb. 8	3:00 p.m.	Tuttle/You Concert in the Sanctuary
Sun.	Feb. 22	3:00 p.m.	Edwards/Brody Concert in the Sanctuary
Sat.	Apr. 25		Rummage Sale
Sat.	May 9		Craft Fair

### **End of year notices**

#### **2008 Contributions due December 31**

Donors must *deliver* donations on or by December 31 in order to claim a charitable contribution deduction on income taxes for 2008. Checks sent in the mail with postmarks of 2008 also qualify. The date on the check does not determine deductibility. Thank you.

#### **Have you sent in your pledge?**

Thank you to all the people who responded promptly to our stewardship drive! Have you returned your card yet? If you need one, there are some on the literature rack in the narthex, or call the office, and we will mail one to you. To help us develop a budget, please return your pledge cards by December 8.

#### **Offering envelopes for 2009**

If you indicated on your pledge card that you would like offering envelopes, you will find a box with your name on the table in the narthex beginning December 21.

#### **Submit bills by December 29**

In order for our 2008 financial reports to accurately reflect the year's activity, bills should be approved and submitted for payment (i.e., placed in the bright pink folder) by December 29 if possible. Deacons: Check your folder for invoices waiting for approval.

#### **Annual reports due January 5**

Annual reports from staff, ministries and other groups are due in the office on Monday, January 5. The combined reports will be available in the narthex on January 11 and 18.

# 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Christmas Concert

## Festival and Youth Choirs

Jeffrey Brody, Festival Choir Director

Andrea Hart, Youth Choir Director

Sunday, December 7, 2008 at 4:00 pm  
in our Sanctuary

Join us for a reception following the concert to meet the musicians.

This is part of the PACC Concert Series for the benefit of the PACC Music Program.

### **Please don't send us a Christmas card**

Again this year, we suggest that you greet all your friends at PACC with one Christmas card by hanging a card from you or your family on the tree in the narthex. You may also mail your card to the church office. Use the money that you don't spend on extra cards and postage to support a favorite charity. The names of those who placed cards on the tree will be listed in the January *Spire*.

**Get your *Spire* by email.** It arrives as a Word document attached to an email and is reformatted to letter-size paper, so you can print any pages that you wish. You will have it earlier than if it is sent via the postal service. What you will not receive is the clip art. Contact the church office to request this change.

---

## Sanctuary Christmas Flowers

I/We wish to have poinsettias for the sanctuary given in memory of/in honor of

---

# Red \_\_\_\_\_ # White \_\_\_\_\_ # Pink \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_ Please deliver to shut-ins \_\_\_\_\_ I will pick up  
(You may take your plant after the late service on Christmas Eve.)

The cost is **\$9.00** per plant. Please enclose your payment with this order. Checks should be made payable to the Park Avenue Congregational Church with a notation for flowers. Please return order and check to the church office no later than **December 8**.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_