

The SPIRE
Park Avenue Congregational Church
The United Church of Christ
Arlington, Massachusetts

The Rev. Dr. William Albright, Pastor

December, 2009

Celebrate Christmas with us

<i>Christmas Concert and Carol Sing</i>	Sunday, December 6 3:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary
<i>Christmas Pageant</i> during worship service	Sunday, December 13 10:00 a.m. in the Sanctuary
<i>Women's Guild Holiday Program</i>	Thursday, December 17 11:00 a.m. in the Chapel
<i>Christmas Eve Worship</i>	Thursday, 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 2010

The following members of the Council of Deacons whose 2009 terms expire at Annual Meeting in January were reelected and now have terms that expire at the end of 2011: Valerie Censabella, Linda Cohn, Don Cohn, Karen Friedman, Jeff Steinheider and Barbara Wagner. Newly elected to the Council of Deacons with terms expiring at the end of 2011 are: Anne Kelly Contini and Scott Jones. Leaving the Council of Deacons upon the expiration of their terms at the end of 2009: Beverly Miller and Jeanne Woodin. Returning to the Council of Deacons with terms that expire at the end of 2010 (who were not up for election this time) are: Margaret Bell, Hong Chin, Anita Clarke, Lauren Evans, Gary Kane, Doug Record and Mike Rich. Thanks to those who have served and those who are about to serve.

Christian Education News

Christmas Pageant

Our Christmas Pageant will be on December 13 during the worship service. This year's pageant is The World Sings Noel. Our rehearsal will be on December 12 from 9:30-11:30 in the sanctuary. This is our one rehearsal with everybody together. Please make every effort to be there, even if you can't stay for the whole time. Please let Kate or Andy know if you can't come to the rehearsal.

Youth Groups

Youth Group II will meet on December 20 at 2:30 on the front steps of PACC and to go to Winchester to sort gifts for City Mission Society. Permission slips will go home on December 6. If you are in Youth Group I and would like to go on this trip, let Kate know.

Advent

There are Advent materials on the table in the narthex to use at home. Children will also receive Advent materials on November 29 at the workshop during Sunday School.

PACC-Men going to Ixtapa December 1

For its December meeting on Tuesday the first, the PACC-Men (that is all adult male members, friends and relatives of the extended PACC family) will be having dinner at Ixtapa Mexican Restaurant & Cantina, 177 Massachusetts Ave, Lexington, beginning at 7:30 p.m. They have good food, a nice atmosphere and great, friendly service. If you haven't been there check out the menu at www.ixtapacantina.com/menu. RSVP to Mike Rich by noon on December 1 so that we can give them advance notice for conversation-friendly set up.

Women's Group gives stuffed animals to APD, receives advice on scams

Stuffed animals made by the Craft Group were presented to Lt. Robert Bongiorno of the Arlington Police Department when the Women's Coffee Group met on November 19. These animals will be placed in cruisers for police to give to children who need comforting.

At the Coffee Group, Lt. Bongiorno discussed scams targeting the elderly and identity theft. There are extra copies of his handout on the table in the narthex.

What the Gospels Really Teach topic for discussion

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS: What the Gospels Really Teach About Jesus's Birth by Marcus J. Borg and John Dominic Crossan will be the topic at the PACC book discussion on Wednesday, December 2nd, at 7:30 p.m. in the Fireplace Room. Two renowned Jesus scholars show how history has biased our reading of the nativity story as it appears in the gospels of Matthew and Luke. As they explore the beginning of the life of Christ, they peel away the sentimentalism that has built up over the last two thousand years around this most well known of all stories to reveal the truth of what the gospels actually say. Borg and Crossan help us to see this well-known narrative afresh by answering the question, "What do these stories mean?" in the context of both the first century and the twenty-first century. They show that the Christmas story, read in its original context, is far richer and more challenging than people imagine.

Marcus Borg is Hundere Distinguished Professor of Religion and Culture at Oregon State University and author of the bestselling *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time* and *The Heart of Christianity*. John Dominic Crossan is author of several bestselling books, including *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* and *Who Killed Jesus?*

Bill Albright will lead the discussion. All are welcome, even if you haven't read or finished the book.

Sarah's Circle to discuss *The Book of Love*

The Book of Love by Kathleen McGowan will be the topic when Sarah's Circle meets on Saturday, December 12th, in the Fireplace Room at PACC. Discussion will begin at 10:00 a.m.; those who wish to meditate should come at 9:30 a.m.

From the Amazon review: After discovering the gospel written by Mary Magdalene, Maureen Paschal receives a strange package containing what looks like an ancient letter written in Latin and signed with a symbol. Its author is an extraordinary woman whom history has overlooked -- or covered up -- Countess Matilda of Tuscany. Weaving together Matilda's little-known true story and Maureen's thrilling search, *The Book of Love* follows two amazing heroines as their stories intertwine through time.

Bill Albright to present Christmas program to Guild December 17

Christmas will be the theme when Women's Guild meets on Thursday, December 17. All women are cordially invited to come to the Chapel at 11:00 a.m. for lunch followed by a program by our minister, Bill Albright. Doris Wilson and Beverly Miller will be hostesses.

From your Mission & Justice Ministry

We will be sponsoring two familiar outreach projects for the Christmas season - Adopt-A-Family and Christmas Shop.

Adopt-A-Family is organized by the Town of Arlington and gifts go to Arlington families. In Adopt-A-Family, you sign up to buy a gift for a specific person in a family. Gifts are *wrapped*. We will have sign up sheets in Parish Hall after Coffee Hour starting Sunday November 15 through November 29th. Wrapped gifts must be brought to church by December 13th.

Christmas Shop is sponsored by the City Mission Society. Please bring an *unwrapped* gift to church by December 6th. Gifts may be left under the table in the Narthex.

Suggested gifts are listed below. The PACC Youth Group will be helping sort gifts at First Church in Winchester on December 20th. It would be great if some of the PACC adults could join them. If you would like to help sort gifts, please let Jill Lewis, Lauren Evans or Karen Friedman know.

Christmas Shop Gift Suggestions

- Winter coats, sweaters and sweatshirts (large sizes especially)
- Hats, mittens, gloves and scarves
- White socks
- Underwear
- Blankets and backpacks
- Toys, games, and books for all ages
- Gift cards from Target, Walgreens, CVS, Kohls or other merchants
- Basic toiletries to pack in CMS "Spread the Joy" bags to be shared with people who are homeless
- Fleece scarves

Thank you for sharing the joy of the season with families in need.

Save the date: Martin Luther King, Jr. Workday

Saturday, January 16 is the date of the annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service and Learning sponsored by City Mission Society. It will run from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and will include a variety of hands-on service projects, concluding with a celebration of music and worship. Last year we did some cleaning up at a church in Boston. There is a \$20 fee for continental breakfast, bag lunch and materials. If you'd like to be part of the PACC group participating in this workday, please let Kate Lindheim or Jill Lewis know by December 15. Children 12 and older are welcome to participate.

Recent Increase in Racist and Anti-Semitic Graffiti in Arlington

By a Nov. 4th letter, PACC was contacted as a member of the Human Rights Commission Rapid Response Network, regarding an alarming number of racist and anti-Semitic graffiti incidents around town.

- A gold **swastika** was spray painted on the red rear door of the skating rink, facing the bike path.
- A town resident found the words “**Dead Niga**” written next to his name on his mailbox.
- The bike path was marked in silver spray paint with the words “**COLORED/WHITE**”.
- A police officer discovered the words “**N_ggers people who annoy you?**” spray painted in the Thorndike Field parking lot”.

The letter went on to say: “It is vital that our community speak out with a common voice against this kind of hatred, to show our citizens that everyone is welcome here regardless of their racial or religious background.... The ugly intolerance of these few vandals is not the sentiment of the town.”

The Mission & Justice Ministry would very much like to explore ways to increase community building with other groups in town, and would love your ideas and feedback.
Thank You

Jill Lewis, Karen Friedman, Lauren Evans

A Personal Reflection:

I attended the recent meeting about Sacred Conversations on Race because I want my faith to make a difference, locally and globally. One understanding of what it is to be called Christian means that when I see or am made aware of injustice, I do what I can to improve the situation. Sometimes action consists of education about the particular injustice; other times, what's needed is prayer. More often than not, prayer and action go hand in hand. Prayer leads me to reflect on what might be done and then to trust that God will give me what's needed to ensure that the Kingdom is shared with all my brothers and sisters. I invite all my PACC brothers and sisters to pray about Sacred Conversations on Race and then to do as the Spirit moves you ☺

Liz McNenny

PACC HOLIDAY FAIR 2009

Once again our Holiday Fair had a wonderful feel to it, despite the other competitive fairs in town, the torrential rains and the poor economy. No matter how tough we think it's going to be, we seem to come together and pull it off with great fellowship and spirit! Thanks to every person who donated in any way to our fair, who contributed time, gifts, and talent, or who worked, shopped or prayed for the success of our Fair. The general fund has gained over \$10,500 because of your effort.

For next year, we are going to start early! There will be a meeting to discuss ideas for the 2010 Fair on Monday, December 7, 2009 at 10 AM in the Chapel. Please try to attend if you have any ideas or comments about the fair.

Huge Thanks from the Cookie Walk

Thank you so very much for so many cookies. When I saw the full Cookie Walk list on the kitchen door, I was struck by the enormous love and kindness of all of my church family. I was struck by the huge time and effort you each took on behalf of the Cookie Walk Fair table, when you each had a great deal to do yourselves. Let it be known that you all helped to make the Cookie Walk table a huge success.

I also want to thank the people who volunteered to help by working at the table in my absence. Thank you all for doing a great job. The remaining cookies will be equally appreciated (frozen now) at the Christmas Concert reception.

My heartfelt thanks to all.

Connie Dugan

Orange and grapefruit sale

Thanks to Jill Lewis for organizing another sale of delicious freshly-picked Florida oranges and grapefruit. It netted \$406 for the General Fund.

Storm Cancellations to be on TV

If church services are cancelled because of a storm, the information should be posted on the three network TV stations (channels 4, 5 and 7) as well as WBZ radio, 1030 am. We also will attempt to post an announcement on the church web site and on the answering machine message. Power outages could affect our ability to access some or all of these systems. Of course, you should not attempt to come to church whenever you feel that conditions are unsafe.

Merger Study Group named, begins listening sessions

For many weeks we have prayed for the members of Pleasant Street Congregational Church as they engaged in the process of discernment considering their future. They have decided that they would like to merge with another congregation within two years. Park Avenue is one of two churches that they have identified as possible merger partners.

At its November meeting, the Council of Deacons appointed a group consisting of Bill Albright, Don Cohn, Linda Cohn, Tim Durning, Gary Kane, Kate Lindheim, Doug Record, Mike Rich, Kathy Richardson, and Barbara Wagner to study the issue and make a recommendation whether we should consider such a change.

The issues are many and profound. There will be two decision points, each of which will require a congregational vote:

- (1) whether to agree to engage in good-faith negotiations with Pleasant Street that might lead to a merger, and, if those go well,
- (2) whether to accept the merger as negotiated.

The next few months will be a time of learning and listening as we engage in our own discernment process.

On November 22 forty-five people attended first scheduled opportunity for members of the PACC community to express thoughts and identify issues needing more information. There will be a second listening session at PACC on Monday, December 7, at 7:30 p.m. in the Fireplace Room (or Chapel). You should also feel free to talk to any member of the study group at any time. You can send email to all of them through a new group address.

What's Happening at PACC

Tue.	Dec. 1	7:30 p.m.	PACC-Men at Ixtapa Restaurant in Lexington
Wed.	Dec. 2	7:30 p.m.	Book discussion in the Fireplace Room
Thu.	Dec. 3	10:00 a.m.	Women's Coffee in the Chapel
		7:30 p.m.	Choir rehearsal in the Nicoll Room
Sun.	Dec. 6		CMS gifts collected
		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
		3:00 p.m.	Christmas Concert in the Sanctuary
Mon.	Dec. 7	10:00 a.m.	2010 Fair planning in the Chapel
		7:30 p.m.	Merger discussion in the Fireplace Room
Tue.	Dec. 8	7:30 p.m.	Merger Study Group in the Fireplace Room
Wed.	Dec. 9	7:30 p.m.	Evening Bible Study in the Fireplace Room
Sat	Dec. 12	9:30 a.m.	Sarah's Circle in the Fireplace Room
		9:30 a.m.	Pageant rehearsal in the Sanctuary
Sun.	Dec. 13		Adopt-a-Family gifts collected
		9:20 a.m.	Youth Choir rehearsal in the Sanctuary
		10:00 a.m.	Worship service includes Christmas Pageant
		11:15 a.m.	Coffee Hour in the Parish Hall
Mon.	Dec. 14	7:30 p.m.	Council of Deacons in the Nicoll Room
Tue.	Dec. 15	7:30 p.m.	Membership Ministry in the Fireplace Room
Wed.	Dec. 16	10:00 a.m.	Staff meeting in the Fireplace Room
		1:00 p.m.	Games Group in the Chapel
		7:30 p.m.	Merger Study Group in the Fireplace Room
Thu.	Dec. 17	11:00 a.m.	Women's Guild in the Chapel
		7:30 p.m.	Choir rehearsal in the Nicoll Room
Sun.	Dec. 20	10:00 a.m.	Worship service
		11:15 a.m.	Communion in the Sanctuary
		11:15 a.m.	Coffee Hour in the Parish Hall
		2:30 p.m.	Youth Group II meets to go to sort CMS gifts
Thu.	Dec. 24	4:00 p.m.	Family-oriented Christmas Eve service
		10:00 p.m.	Candlelight Christmas Eve service
Sun.	Dec. 27	10:00 a.m.	Worship service
		11:15 a.m.	Coffee Hour in the Parish Hall
		4:00 p.m.	Youth Group I in the Nicoll Room (tentative)
Mon.	Dec. 28		Deadline for January <i>Spire</i>

coming later in the year

Sun.	Jan. 24	12:00 noon	Annual meeting in the Parish Hall
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Office hours at Christmastime

The church office will be closed December 25 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 during that time.

End of year notices

2009 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 2009. Checks sent in the mail with postmarks of 2009 also qualify. The date on the check does not determine deductibility. Thank you.

Gifts of stock

The church has a brokerage account in order to accept gifts of stock. If you would like to make such a donation, contact Gary Kane or Tim Durning about the procedure.

Have you sent in your pledge?

Thank you to all the people who responded promptly to our stewardship drive! As of November 24 we have received 64 pledge cards with financial commitments for next year; for 2009 we have 98 pledges. 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 7.

Offering envelopes for 2010

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 20.

Submit bills by December 28

In order for our 2009 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 28 if possible. Deacons: Check your folder for invoices waiting for approval.

Annual reports due January 4

Annual reports from staff, ministries and other groups are due in the office on Monday, January 4. The combined reports will be available in the narthex on January 10 and 17.

Financial Update: At the end of October payments on pledges are \$8900 behind budget. There are 15 pledging individuals / households that are more than \$100 behind. Is your pledge up to date? If you have questions, call Kathy in the office.

19th Annual Christmas Concert

Including selections from Bach's Christmas Oratorio and Carol Singing

PACC's Festival and Youth Choirs

Jeffrey Brody, Festival Choir Director
Andrea Hart, Youth Choir Director

Sunday, December 6 at 3:00 pm in our Sanctuary

Join us for a reception following the concert in Parish Hall.

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



Reports on the MBA Fall Meeting and MACUCC Annual Meeting

Metropolitan Boston Association

The fall meeting of the Metropolitan Boston Association of the United Church of Christ was held on Sunday, November 1st at the United Parish in Brookline. Attending from PACC were Judie Phelps, delegate, and Bill Albright and Dick Phelps, clergy. The Gathering opened at 2:45 with the business meeting during which greetings were brought to the group and minutes and reports were given and accepted.

City Mission Society of Boston presented a program based on the documentary Jahnol's Plan for Youth Peace" which was produced by CMS and received the 2009 Best Youth Filmmaker Award at the prestigious Roxbury Film Festival in August. The video tells the story of Jahnol Norfleet's friends and sister, who carry on his commitment to peace after his tragic shooting death in 2006. Youth Peace Leaders addressed the group after the viewing.

The Annual Meeting and Gathering ended with a communion service.

Massachusetts Conference, United Church of Christ

The 210th Annual Meeting of the Massachusetts Conference, United Church of Christ was held October 16-17 in the DCU Center in Worcester. The theme for this year's conference was "Generosity as a way of life." Attending from PACC were Judie Phelps and Karen Friedman, delegates, Mike Rich of the Missions and Justice Program of the

MACUCC, and Bill Albright and Dick Phelps, clergy. Friday's sessions started at 10 A.M. with registration, orientation for new delegates, and luncheons for Laity and Clergy. Dean Gregory Jones spoke at the Clergy gathering, and Rev. Dr. Susan Smith spoke at the laity luncheon.

Following the luncheons, discernment meetings were held where attendees broke into small discussion groups and considered the question "As we discern our local church budgets, to what extent are we obligated by our covenant with God and with one another to financially support the wider church?"

The first Plenary Session was held on Friday afternoon before Dinner. Reports were received from the Conference Minister and Conference President. On Friday, 289 delegates, 47 clergy and a few other laity were in attendance. Motions were passed that did some updating on the policies and committees of the MACUCC, especially one that reduced the size of all commissions to 6 members for each. A resolution to Reverse Climate Change and Save God's Creation was passed as amended. Dinner was served, followed by Worship where Rev. Dr. Susan Smith preached.

Saturday saw another early start at 7:30 A. M. with a continental breakfast. The Second Plenary Session was held during which the Keynote Address was given by Dean Gregory Jones followed by the report on the budget. From 10:30 to 12:00 noon, all attended seminars, topics of which ranged from theology to stewardship to greening your church. Since the annual meetings theme was on "Generosity," most of the seminars were based on different aspects of this topic.

At lunch on Saturday, clergy who had been ordained 50 years were presented and honored. Since this is the 25th year since the MACUCC started the Open and Affirming Movement within the conference, an Anniversary Celebration was held. Awards were given for various achievements, and musical entertainment was provided by Butterflyfish.

The third Plenary session was held Saturday afternoon where all further business was completed including Clergy Compensation Package recommendations, Nominating Report and elections of Commissions, Budget acceptance, and Amendments to the By-Laws. The changes to the By-Laws included changes in the numbers of Volunteers to be elected to committees, addition of email as a manner of notification of meetings and to change the way that the conference does business allowing "real-time voice teleconferencing" for members not able to be physically present at commission meetings.

The day concluded at 4:30 P.M. with worship and communion.

Respectively submitted,
Judie Phelps, delegate

Praise the Lord! Hallelujah!!

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Praise the Lord! Hallelujah! Praise God!
Praise God! Thank You O God, for Your love,
O God, You are gracious,
Full of compassion, mercy and love.
Thank You O God!

O God, we'll thank and praise Your Name
For Your marvelous works
For Your faithfulness.
For Your loving kindness

O God, You gave to the world,
Your only begotten Son Jesus,
That whoever believes in the Lord
Jesus Christ, shall be saved

Thank You, O God.
For Your Son Jesus Christ
Our Redeemer, Savior, Healer and Sustainer.
Praise the Lord! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

Praise God! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Praise our Lord Jesus Christ!
Praise the Holy Spirit!
Praise the Lord! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

O God, You are worthy
To receive glory and honor and power
From the days of eternity,
Praise the Lord! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Amen!! Amen!! Amen!!

Merry Christmas!
Feliz Navidad!

The Almighty God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Love in Christ Jesus,

Song by: Zoila Flores-Quesada

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*.

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 7**.

Signed _____ Telephone _____