

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

The Rev. Dr. William Albright, Pastor

January, 2011

WARRANT
Annual Meeting

The **Annual Meeting** of the Park Avenue Congregational Church, United Church of Christ of Arlington Heights, Massachusetts, is called for Sunday, January 23, 2011, at 12:00 noon, in the Parish Hall, to consider the following:

1. To receive the report of the treasurer and vote on the annual budget;
2. To receive the reports of the minister, officers, ministries, and other organizations;
3. To approve the Council of Deacons' selection for moderator, vice moderator, clerk, treasurer and financial secretary;
4. To transact any other business that may legally come before the meeting.

If for any reason (such as weather) a quorum should not be present on January 23, the meeting will be adjourned to Sunday, January 30, 2011, at 12:00 noon.

/s/ Michael L. Rich

Michael Rich, Moderator

/s/ Valerie L. Censabella

Valerie Censabella, Clerk

Active members and associate members are urged to attend.

Also --

OLD FASHIONED HAM AND BEAN SUPPER, Saturday, January 8

FELLOWSHIP ROOM DEDICATION, Sunday, January 16

See inside for more details

Christian Education News

Sunday School

On January 16, we'll have just two Sunday School classes. Older kids will meet in the Nicoll Room and younger kids will meet in the preschool room downstairs.

Youth Groups

Youth Group I (grades 5-7) will meet on Sunday, January 9 in the Nicoll Room from 4-5:30. We'll make valentines for the youth group to sell at Annual Meeting on January 23 and after church on January 30.

Youth Group II (grades 8 and up) are invited to participate in the Martin Luther King service day on January 15. Please let Kate know if you are interested in participating by January 3.

Valentines

Youth Group I will sell valentines at Annual Meeting and after church in Parish Hall on January 30. Valentines are \$1 and include postage. Proceeds benefit the Youth Fund.

PACC-Men to have guys' night out on January 4

PACC-Men will go to The Corner Pocket pool hall in The Wave Sports Pub (<http://www.wavesportspub.com/>), 411 Waverley Oaks Road - # 2, Waltham, at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, January 4, for an evening of pool, video games, TV, guy food, conversation and fun. All men are welcome. RSVP to Mike Rich by 3:30 p.m. on January 4, letting him know if you plan to car pool from church or drive yourself there.

Sarah's Circle reflects on writings of Dalai Lama January 8

Sarah's Circle women's book group will meet Saturday, January 8, from 10 a.m. until 12 noon in the Fireplace Room. Those who wish to meditate may come at 9:30 a.m. Each person is reading a book of her own choosing by the Dalai Lama to discuss. All women are welcome. Contact Merrith Sabo-Jones if you have questions.

PACC-Women will discuss New Year's Resolutions January 24

PACC Women will meet Monday, January 24th at 7:30 p.m. in the FELLOWSHIP Room (handicapped accessible!). We will discuss New Year's resolutions/goals for the new year and what we would like to accomplish on a personal level. All women are invited to attend! Light refreshments will be provided. Contact Betty if you have any questions or ideas for upcoming meetings.

Minister's Message

In the church, we move into the new year still in the season of Christmas. The season doesn't change until the Day of Epiphany, which is a fixed date on the church calendar—always January 6th, also called “the twelfth day of Christmas.” Epiphany marks the transition between the infancy of Jesus and his baptism by John the Baptist in the river Jordan, which is the point at which his active adult ministry begins. It amuses me to think that, in the church year, it takes Jesus only a couple of weeks to grow up! That must be confusing to any young children who happen to pay attention to the Gospel stories that we read in church.

The Christmas carol wonders, “What child is this?” One of the great mysteries of Jesus' biography is how his intellectual, emotional, and spiritual life is formed in those “hidden years” between his infancy and the baptism that takes place in his thirtieth year. Our Bible says precious little about that. Matthew's Gospel tells that strange story about the magi's search for the newborn King that initiated King Herod's paranoid reign of terror throughout the region of Judea. We're told that Jesus and his parents fled to Egypt to escape Herod's murderous intent. Even after the old king's death, Judea wasn't a safe haven for the holy family, so they settled farther north, in Nazareth of Galilee. That, Matthew explains, is why Jesus was widely known as “Jesus of Nazareth.”

Luke's Gospel is aware of a tradition about Jesus quite different from Matthew's stories. Eight days after his Bethlehem birth, the male child is circumcised according to Mosaic law and given the name Jesus. Sometime later, Joseph and Mary “present him to the Lord” at the great Jerusalem temple, offering a small sacrifice for his “purification.” At the temple, an old man and an old woman each make prophetic utterances about Jesus' future. Luke tells us that the holy family then returned to the town of Nazareth in Galilee, where young Jesus “grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him” [2:40]. We'd surely like to know more of the details of Jesus' early years in Nazareth.

Luke shares with us just one more story of Jesus' childhood. He is twelve years old now—a boy growing into manhood. During the Passover festival, when the people of Israel recall their liberation from slavery in Egypt, young Jesus makes a pilgrimage to the holy city of Jerusalem with his parents. On their return to Nazareth, however, Mary and Joseph lose track of Jesus, so they go back to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days, they find him in the temple, amazing the scholars with his understanding. His mother upbraids him for disregarding his parents, but Jesus astounds her with a cryptic reply: “Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?” [2:49]. We know, as does his mother, that Jesus isn't referring to Joseph. Luke briefly adds that Jesus “increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor” [2:52]—that is, he matured spiritually as well as physically—but the Bible takes no interest in the next *two decades* until Jesus' baptism as an adult.

The theological significance of the season of Epiphany in the church is that it's a time for us to get to know Jesus better. The word “epiphany” literally means a “showing forth,” “appearance,” or “manifestation.” In other words, during the Epiphany season, the scripture readings and liturgy of the church reveal something about Jesus' true identity, rounding out the strong hints that Advent and Christmas have given us. During Epiphany, the Christ Child becomes Jesus the man—but even more, the man Jesus who is filled with divine Spirit.

It's superb religious drama as John the Baptist, like a great prophet of Israel, emerges from the wilderness to prepare the world for Jesus' epiphany. John warns people to repent—that is, change their hearts, minds, and behavior—and return to “the way of the Lord.” The sign of their repentance is baptism, or immersion, in the waters of the Jordan “for the forgiveness of sins.” How strange, then, that Jesus is also baptized! New Testament scholars note the early Christian community's embarrassment about Jesus' participation in this ritual.

And yet, the occasion of Jesus' baptism evokes a spectacular epiphany, which the earliest of the four Gospels describes with the most vivid language: “And just as [Jesus] was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased’” [Mark 1:10-11]. Mark's Gospel makes it sound like a vision that only Jesus was privy to, but if so, then how did Mark know about it? It could be that Jesus' epiphany to the world first required that he be clear about his own identity. The vision described by Mark, then, focuses more on Jesus' *self*-understanding than on the witness of the surrounding crowd that would only gradually, but never completely, comprehend the mystery of who Jesus was.

The season of Epiphany places Christians like us squarely within that surrounding crowd. We, too, only gradually, but never completely, comprehend the true nature of Jesus. I suspect that, even if we could know more about Jesus' earlier life, it wouldn't help us much. That's because the nature of Jesus is revealed to us only as we follow him day by day, bearing witness to the transformative power of the divine Spirit that surges through him.

In fact, our participation in the season of Epiphany merely whets our appetite for a deeper experience of the mystery of Jesus' identity. That will come as we move through the next nine weeks of Epiphany into the season of Lent, which prepares the faithful for the most profound mystery of the Christian faith: the significance of Jesus' death and resurrection.

But first things first. The question for now is: where does baptism lead those of us who choose to follow Jesus through the coming weeks *beyond* Christmas? If we can find an answer to *that* question in our life of faith together, that will surely be an epiphany for *us*!

See you in church! In the meantime, “may mercy, peace, and love be yours in full measure!” [Jude 2].

-- *BILL*

Give us a hand

On Saturday, January 8, beginning at 10 a.m. we will remove the greens from the Sanctuary and Narthex. It would be great to have many hands and strong backs to help with this work.

OLD FASHIONED HAM AND BEAN SUPPER - Saturday, January 8

Ham - Baked Beans - Mac & Cheese - Cole Slaw
Beverages & dessert

\$7.50/adult, \$4.00/child (under 12)

Serving begins at 5:30 p.m.

followed by family friendly board games!
(bring something you like to play)

RSVP Required – by Thursday, January 6th!

- Sign up on sheet in Parish Hall
- or contact Diane Wells
- or Betty Rich

Sorry - no snow date!

COMING IN FEBRUARY –

SOUPER-BOWL SUNDAY!!!!

Take-out lunch for purchase at coffee hour after church on February 6 - in time for the big game!
Soup and sandwiches and a light dessert will be available! More information to follow!

Fellowship Room dedication January 16

Dedication of our new Fellowship Room will be January 16 after church. The brief ceremony will be followed by a presentation by the Capital Campaign Implementation Committee about next steps in the other projects: accessibility and organ console.

What's Happening at PACC

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|------|---------|------------|---|
| Sun. | Jan. 2 | 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 |
| Mon. | Jan. 3 | | Annual reports due |
| Tue. | Jan. 4 | 7:30 p.m. | PACC-Men go to Corner Pocket |
| Thu. | Jan. 6 | 10:00 a.m. | Women's Coffee in the Fellowship Room |
| | | 7:30 p.m. | Choir rehearsal in the Nicoll Room |
| Sat. | Jan. 8 | 9:30 a.m. | Sarah's Circle in the Fireplace Room |
| | | 10:00 a.m. | Remove greens, Sanctuary and Narthex |
| | | 6:30 p.m. | Ham and bean supper in the Parish Hall |
| Sun. | Jan. 9 | 10:00 a.m. | Worship service |
| | | 11:15 a.m. | Coffee Hour in the Parish Hall |
| | | 11:30 a.m. | Budget discussion in the Fellowship Room |
| | | 11:45 a.m. | Youth Choir rehearsal in the Nicoll Room |
| | | 4:00 p.m. | Youth Group I in the Nicoll Room |
| Mon. | Jan. 10 | 7:30 p.m. | Council of Deacons in the Fellowship Room |
| Wed. | Jan. 12 | 10:30 a.m. | Staff meeting in the Fireplace Room |
| | | 7:30 p.m. | Evening Bible Group in the Fireplace Room |
| Thu. | Jan. 13 | 7:30 p.m. | Choir rehearsal in the Nicoll Room |
| Sat. | Jan. 15 | TBA | Martin Luther King, Jr., Day of Service |
| Sun. | Jan. 16 | 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 |
| | | 11:30 a.m. | Fellowship Room dedication, Capital Campaign update |
| Mon. | Jan. 17 | | <i>Martin Luther King, Jr. Day</i> ; office closed |
| Tue. | Jan. 18 | 7:30 p.m. | Membership Ministry at the Record/Stark home, 15 Bellevue Rd.,
Arlington |
| Thu. | Jan. 20 | 10:00 a.m. | Women's Coffee in the Fellowship Room |
| | | 7:30 p.m. | Choir rehearsal in the Nicoll Room |

Sun.	Jan. 23	10:00 a.m.	Worship service
		11:15 a.m.	Luncheon in the Parish Hall
		12:00 noon	Annual Meeting in the Parish Hall
Mon.	Jan. 24	7:30 p.m.	PACC-Women in the Fellowship Room
Wed.	Jan. 26	7:30 p.m.	Evening Bible Group in the Fireplace Room
Thu.	Jan. 27	7:30 p.m.	Choir rehearsal in the Nicoll Room
Sun.	Jan. 30	10:00 a.m.	Worship service
		11:15 a.m.	Coffee Hour in the Parish Hall

coming later in the year

Sun.	Feb. 6	11:30 a.m.	Soup & Subs to go
Sat.	Feb. 12	TBA	Benjamin Road Band in the Parish Hall
Sat.	Mar. 5	3:00 p.m.	Trumpet and Organ Concert in the Sanctuary
Tue.	Mar. 8	5:30 p.m.	Shrove Tuesday Pancake Dinner
Sun.	Apr. 3	3:00 p.m.	Vox Lucens Concert in the Sanctuary
Sat.	Apr. 30		Rummage Sale in the Parish Hall
Sat.	May 14		Craft Fair in the Parish Hall

Storm Cancellations to be on TV

If church services are cancelled because of a storm, the information should be 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. 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.

In preparation for Annual Meeting

Annual reports

There will be copies of reports of staff, officers and ministries along with financial information on the table in the narthex beginning January 9. If you would like a copy mailed to you, please call the office, 781-643-8680.

Important Budget Meeting – PACC needs your input!

In order to prepare a balanced budget for 2011 some choices need to be made. The budget meeting on January 9th (after the Worship Service) is the opportunity to voice your views and help guide the Finance and Property Ministry in making these decisions. It is a very important meeting for all who care about PACC. Come, learn, and participate.

Lunch to precede Annual Meeting

The Council of Deacons will provide a soup and sandwich luncheon preceding the Annual Meeting. You do not have to bring any food; there will be a basket for donations to offset the expense of the meal.

Annual Meeting Childcare

We'll have childcare available for young children during Annual Meeting on January 23 and a movie for older children.

Concerning donations

Donation statements

To ensure that your church contributions are tax deductible, do not file your 2010 income tax return until you have received a written acknowledgment of your contributions from the church. Some of your contributions may not be tax-deductible if you file your tax return before receiving this written acknowledgement, which will be mailed mid-January.

Offering envelopes for 2011

If you indicated on your pledge card that you would like offering envelopes, there is a box with your name on the table in the narthex. Those remaining at the end of the month will be mailed. If you would like yours sent sooner, please call the office, 781-643-8680.

Have you sent in your pledge?

Thank you to all the people who responded promptly to our stewardship drive! As of December 28 we have received 86 pledges totaling \$141,895. In 2010 we had 90 pledges for \$150,595. If you are uncertain whether you returned a pledge card, call the office at 781-643-8680. Every pledge is important. We depend on these estimates of giving to build our budget for the coming year.

In the wider community

"Once More to the Cabin": The Protestant Chaplaincy Council at Newton Wellesley Hospital (of which Dick Phelps is the outgoing president) presents the film "Once More to the Cabin," a visual meditation on aging, tradition and family on Tuesday, January 11, at 7:00 p.m. (Snow date: January 13) at Wellesley Village Congregational Church, 2 Central Street, Wellesley. For more information about this film, which is by and about adults taking care of aging parents, pick up one of the flyers on the literature rack in the Narthex or go to <http://gloamingpictures.com/cabin.htm>.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Observance

Monday, January 17

**Guest Speaker: Emerson Stamps, author
Music by St. Paul's AME Choir**

Tapas begins at 6:00 p.m.
Please bring table-ready finger food,
appetizer or dessert to serve six.

Program begins at 7:15 p.m.

At Arlington Town Hall, 730 Massachusetts Ave. A free-will offering will support the King Monument in Washington, D.C., the Arlington Public Schools and the Arlington African-American Scholarship Fund. Call 781-643-4345 for more information

You are invited to help celebrate

Pleasant Street Congregational Church's Bright Legacy

Saturday, February 5

3:00 p.m. Open House includes a display of photos and historic artifacts; light refreshments
4:00 p.m. Worship Service
5:30 p.m. Reception

Save the date: March 5 for the Mass. Conference UCC's Super Saturday day of workshops.

See the possibilities at

http://macucc.s3.amazonaws.com/F4061ACB6F8142B2BC51766DFBD19DF8_super-sat-march-brochure.pdf

Many Thanks

Heartfelt thanks to everyone who shared the joy of the Advent season by buying a gift or donating money for Adopt-A-Family, Adopt-A-Veteran or City Mission Society Christmas Shop. Special thanks to Lauren Evans for coordinating and delivering Adopt-A-Family gifts, to Jill Lewis for coordinating and delivering Adopt-A-Veteran gifts, to Jeff Carver for delivering CMS gifts, and to the Kate Lindheim and the Youth Group for helping sort CMS gifts at First Church in Winchester.

Happy New Year!!

Your Mission and Justice Ministry

The wreath sale organized by Betty Rich netted \$112.75, and the sale of oranges and grapefruit, headed by Jill Lewis, made \$418.50. A big thank you to them for their work and to all of you who supported these projects.

Thanks to your generosity on Christmas Eve, PACC is sending \$1095.50 as our contribution to the United Church of Christ Christmas Fund, which provides assistance to ministers and retired ministers and their families who are in need.