



Being ever thankful for the wonder and generosity of God's love, Our prayerful hope is to:

Proclaim the living Christ
In Worship
In Nurture
In Fellowship

Serving joyfully - all to the glory of God.

The Church Mouse

Newsletter of Hope Presbyterian Church

www.hopepresbyterianchurch.com

November 2015

From the Pastor's Desk

Faith. The nice thing about faith is that we have a bona fide scriptural definition for the word: "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." (Hebrews 1:11). The best news about faith, though, is that you don't really need to have a lot of it. According to Scripture (Matthew 17:20, Luke 17:6), Jesus said that if we have faith the size of a mustard seed, nothing would be impossible for us. That thought gives me a good deal of comfort.

When I think of faith I think of the little girl, Susie, in the movie, *Miracle On 34th Street*. (If you haven't seen this movie, you should!) Susie's Mother didn't want Susie to be sucked in by fantasy and she took great pains to raise a logical, rational child who would grow up to be a logical, rational adult. Her mother's first

order of business was to be sure that Susie knew that there is no Santa Clause.

Well, wouldn't you know it? Susie's Mother worked for Macy's and she was very much involved in the selection of the store's Santa Clauses. Susie was, therefore, very much aware that the Macy's Santas had pillow stomachs and fake beards. (And most of them drank a little too much.) But one day, Macy's hired a Santa who claimed to be the real thing - - Kris Kringle, himself. Susie was not about to be taken in by this; but, gosh, this Santa was VERY convincing. Consequently, life got very confusing for Susie.

Susie didn't want to ask Santa for a Christmas present because, after all, as convincing as Mr. Kringle was, he really was just a very nice man. But Mr. Kringle insisted, so Susie

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decided to ask Santa for a house. Not a doll house – a real house in the suburbs. Maybe, just maybe this guy really was Santa.

Christmas day was spent at Mr. Kringle's retirement home, but there was nothing under the tree about a house for Susie. Being the logical, rational kid she was, Susie was politely appreciative of all the gifts she received. You wouldn't know it to look at her, but Susie was utterly disappointed. On the drive home Susie sat in the back of the car joylessly murmuring, "I believe... I believe.... I believe." Susie was torn between her doubt and her faith – and she could not seem to give up either one.

Truthfully, this is where I spend a surprising amount of time – caught somewhere between my doubt and my faith, unable to relinquish either one. The faith part of me knows that God is working in the world to bring all of creation back to the perfection God originally intended. When I get a glimpse of that, I know I have encountered pure Grace. But, when I read the newspapers and see the horror and violence in the world, it is difficult to breathe. I don't know what to do about that. But faith does.

Faith, it seems, is not the antidote to doubt. Faith and doubt coexist quite uncomfortably and indivisibly together. But even when doubt is raging, faith seems to maintain the upper hand because we don't need to have a lot of faith to outmaneuver a whole lot of doubt. Faith keeps hanging in there no matter what doubt tries to do. A preacher I know once said "the point of faith is not that you will be certain. The point of faith is that you will continue worshipping."

Huh? I had to think about that. I think what he meant is that when we worship we bring all that we are, including our fears and doubts, and we lay it all at the cross of Jesus Christ. Our doubts and fears are no longer the center of our attention. Jesus is. And that is worship. The more we worship the more we encounter the living Christ. Then the eyes of our hearts

become more receptive to the sightings of God working in the world and our faith is sustained.

There are times when it is all we can do to get up and get dressed and come to Church on Sunday morning. We may find ourselves having to rely on the worshipping community around us to carry us during the service. It doesn't seem like much, but it is at least mustard-size faith, and it is enough.

Pastor Leslianne

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Sunday Morning Fellowship

Sunday morning fellowship is the time when we have an opportunity to greet our brothers and sisters in Christ while enjoying a cookie or two with a steaming hot cup of coffee. We all are grateful for the individuals and families who so generously contribute to the well-being of the Hope community by providing cookies and snacks for everyone's enjoyment.

The 2016 sign up will soon be up in the Narthex. Keep a lookout for it! You won't want to miss the opportunity to share with your friends in Christ God's bounty to you! (If you already have a date in mind, let us know by sending an email to:

info@hopepresbyterianchurch.org)



Second Pledge Card Dedication

First and foremost, a BIG THANK YOU to the 43 households and individuals who have thus far made a 2016 financial pledge. 94 pledge cards went out during this year's Stewardship Campaign. 43 is about 46% of all potential pledges. The Stewardship Committee is deeply grateful for those who responded so graciously to this year's campaign with their pledges. Your generosity – of time and talent, as well as treasure -- makes the work of our church possible. We also appreciate that some of you submitted your pledges earlier this year. That said, there are still approximately 51 households from whom we have not yet heard. This number represents about 54% of pledge cards not yet returned. Your participation is vital and valued! If you have not pledged, please prayerfully consider giving thanks to God by pledging your support to our church. The one thing that is happening new this year is there will be a second dedication of all pledge cards. Your pledges are critically important in the success and life of our church and therefore it is extremely essential to dedicate all returned pledge cards. The second dedication will take place at the worship service on **Sunday, December 27, 2015**. Over the next six weeks, Team Leaders will be calling every 2016 pledging household from whom we have not yet heard. Please, do not wait to get called; make Hope and Generosity Our Common Cause by simply taking the initial step of submitting your pledge card.

Hope Presbyterian Church has been in existence for more than forty years. Most of us joined Hope more recently, and it's incumbent upon us to give our full support for continuous existence as was intended by its founding spirited members. So, I leave you with these words from the Old Testament book of Joshua:

After forty years of wandering in the wilderness, the Israelites finally arrived at the Promised Land. However, the spring rains and melting mountain snows combined to overflow the banks of the Jordan River. On the eve of their crossing, Joshua told the people, "Consecrate yourselves; for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you." (Joshua 3:5) The next morning, as their feet touched the rushing current, the river stopped flowing, and they crossed on dry ground. It wasn't until they took the first step of faith into the water that they witnessed the amazing things that God had promised them.

The question is: have you taken the first step of faith with your generosity? With your continued commitment in these few weeks, and with God's grace, we will certainly get there. THANK YOU once more for your commitment to our life together in this special faith community!

God bless each of you and bless our church.

Ivo Azongha
Stewardship Committee Chair



Tis the Season to be Jolly...Tis Advent.



The Candles on the Advent Wreath symbolize the promises of HOPE, LOVE, JOY and PEACE, resounding themes of Advent. These words speak to wonderful reasons to slow down and enjoy the season of our Lord and Savior throughout the month. Let's center ourselves on the symbolism of all the candles on the wreath and count our blessings as we count down the days recalling with each lighting of a candle the greatest gift that mankind could ever receive.

Jackie Batcha-Anyu

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What comes to mind when the liturgical calendar indicates the beginning of Advent? Without any thought, I will say Christmas season. What about you? I was not sure how to truly answer this question so I decided to google the word Advent. Among the many meanings and pictures that came through, I thought I should share a few things with you. Some meanings of advent include: "the arrival of a notable person, thing or event"; "the first season of the Christian church year, leading up to Christmas and including the four preceding Sundays"... Some synonyms of Advent include "arrival, appearance, emergence, dawn, birth, rise"... This year the Advent season is from Nov 29th through Dec 24th, a season that we should direct our minds and hearts to prepare for the coming of Christ, culminating with the celebration of Nativity of our Lord.

In this day and time, the true meaning of Advent is often overshadowed by the excessive commercialization and quest for material possession. Most people know that Christmas is approaching when stores start advertising "sales" and "discounts" as early as October these days. Then as the season gets closer, Christmas trees, lights, decorations, colors, long lines in the stores... all continue to obscure the true meaning of Advent.

How do we stay focused?

Greetings from the Mission Committee

Christmas Joy Offering

It is hard to believe that the Advent Season is here. When considering gifts to buy, please also consider our Christmas Joy Offering. This is the time to think about giving back to the Presbytery and to those who nurture our spiritual well-being. This offering provides financial assistance to current and former church workers and their families and it provides opportunities for deserving students to attend Presbyterian-related racial and ethnic colleges and schools. The theme this year is "Promises Made. Promises Kept."

Shepherds Cove

The cold weather is here. Shepherd's Cove, the shelter in Prince Georges County for Women and Children, is in need of warm blankets this winter. We are asking for cash donations so that we can shop for these needed items. Each dorm houses 20 people.

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Mission Committee (Continued)

We would like to collect enough money to purchase at least 20 twin sized blankets. We all know how cold the winter nights can be. If you are able, please contribute, so that these women and children can have a warm night's sleep. We are accepting donations until November 29th and plan to deliver during the first week in December.

Help By Phone Pantry

Thank you all for your generous contributions of bread. Here at Hope, each Communion Sunday is also known as "Bread Sunday". We ask that you continue to make these contributions each month. When you buy a loaf of bread for your family, pick up an extra one for our Food Pantry. We would also like to start collecting a different item each month. We provide the basic needs, however most of the families that seek our assistance have children. We would like to provide an extra treat for them if we can. During the month of December we are asking for children's cereal. A basket will be in the Narthex for your donations.

The Mission Committee would like to thank each of you for your continued support as we reach out to those who are less fortunate and who are right here in our community. Peace and Blessings to you and your families, especially during this holiday season!

The Music Corner Andrew Davis, Director of Music

Once again we find ourselves at the threshold of Advent and Christmas and it seems that for all of us, time gets faster and faster each year. The Hope Choir has begun work on Advent and Christmas music and will be singing December 6th, 13th, and 20th while taking a break on November 29th. If you are in 6th grade and above, you are highly encouraged to sing in the choir during Advent and Christmas cycle at 7:15 PM on Wednesday and/or 9:30 AM Sunday morning, both in the sanctuary. Reading music is not required!!

On Christmas Eve, things will be a little different, as I will be heading back to California after church on December 20th to spend Christmas Eve with my family and spend one last Christmas Eve with my two other church families, but will be involved in leadership with both services there. A big thank you in advance to Lisa Ramadass and Elaine Kass for their musical leadership on Christmas Eve and to Pastor Leslianne, Session, and Personnel for their support as I also continue working towards becoming a certified candidate for ministry in the UMC. I will be back in DC around mid-January, as I will be preaching at the United Methodist Church of Rancho Cordova on January 3 and welcoming our new pastor on January 10. While I am away, my friend/Wesley classmate, and PCUSA pastor in training Billy Klutz will once again be filling in for me on December 27th and Lisa Ramadass will be filling in for me January 3. Be sure to thank both of them for being able to fill in!!

In the meantime, let us prepare our hearts and take the time to enjoy this Christmas season, as we begin to close the chapter of 2015 and begin a new chapter in the year 2016.

Session Snippet – November 10, 2015 Stated Meeting

- Called to order by Moderator, Rev. Leslieanne A. Bernstein
- Devotions conducted by Wellington Uzamere who read some writings done by Steve Jobs. Many life lessons to be learned from these writings, one important one was to treasure love. Many of these writings follow the lessons to be learned from Philippians 2. Meeting opened with prayer by Wellington.
- The Session Minutes of the Stated Meeting of October 13, the Congregational Meeting of October 25, and the Called Meeting of November 1, 2015 were MSC.
- Treasurer's Report of October 31, 2015 was MSC.
- Building Use - Letters will be sent out by December 15, 2015 to all building use participants to request their plans for use of Hope's facilities for 2016. The fees for Hope's facility use for 2016 will be discussed at the December session meeting. The Pastor will check for restrictions on use of the sanctuary by other religious groups.
- Review of Membership List - The session reviewed the active membership list to update it for 2015 statistics. The review revealed that there were approximately 11 or 12 people who no longer attended church or supported Hope. Letters will be drafted and sent to these people encouraging their return, or for them to request removal from the membership rolls.
- Received Reports: (1) Pastor's: Several pastoral visits were made; took part in Witness to Life Elias Ayafor, Collington Bible Study, preached at Ingleside; had several meetings with various elders and members, attended Interim Ministers Colloquy and facilitated Health Boundaries Training for NCP; will attend presbytery on November 17, and will be officiating at a

wedding in Southern California in December. The Pastor will be meeting with Julia Freeman, Hope's liaison from the Committee on Ministry. (2) Clerk: Holy Communion was observed November 1. (3) Worship: Worship met November 10, and started planning and preparation for upcoming Harvest Festival on November 15, Longest Night service for December 16, and Christmas Eve Service on December 24; poinsettias have been preordered, sign up will take place during November; set up decoration schedule for sanctuary for Advent; have approved purchase of new registration pads. (4) Mission: Mission has scheduled coordinators for meal plans for Prince George's House through June of 2016. The appeal for contents for the Thanksgiving Baskets has begun and the baskets will be packed on November 22. Mission will be purchasing blankets for a dorm at Shepherd's Cove for Christmas and is preparing for the Christmas Joy Offering in a Minute for Mission that will be done each Sunday of Advent. (5) Education: Education will be planning a short Christmas pageant, mainly for the children. (6) Stewardship: Stewardship kicked off the campaign for 2016 on October 25 and as of this date 40 pledge cards have been returned, team leaders will continue with follow-up phone calls to try and encourage people to turn in their pledge cards before the December dedication. (7) Trustees: Will be preparing the 2016 building use letters, The insurance money received for the sign will not be enough to include installation.

- **Shepherding Concerns Discussed**

- Adjourned with prayer at 8:50 PM.

HOPE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

2015 BUDGET AVERAGE CONGREGATIONAL FAMILY GIVING ANALYSIS

AS OF OCTOBER 31, 2015

The following Fiscal Year 2015 Cash Flow Projection for the Average Congregational Family Giving as of October 31, 2015 is intended to show where the church is financially in meeting our 2015 Budgeted (\$34.50) Average Congregational Family Giving Goal.

2015 BUDGETED CONTRIBUTIONS

OFFERINGS	\$162,486
MISSION SUPPORT	6,150
TOTAL BUDGETED CONTRIBUTIONS	\$168,636

CUMULATIVE AVERAGE CONGREGATIONAL FAMILY WEEKLY GIVING AS OF OCTOBER 31, 2015 **\$31.90**

PROJECTED CONGREGATIONAL FAMILY OFFERINGS AND MISSION SUPPORT COMPUTATION **\$155,927**

2015 Average Congregational Family Giving Budget Shortfall **(\$12,709)**

