

Beacon on the Hill



"A city on a hill cannot be hid ... Let your light so shine that others will give glory to your Father in Heaven"

January, 2012

From the Pastor:

The Sacraments

We participate in the sacraments because their administration is a mark of the true church. The sacraments nourish and sustain us as God, through the Holy Spirit, changes our hearts and fulfills in us the promises that He has given. The sacraments are signs and seals of the work God is doing within us. The sacraments are God's active work in us, not simply symbols or reminders. Article 35 of the Belgic Confession tells us that it is "with humility and reverence we receive the holy sacrament in the gathering of God's people, as we engage together, with thanksgiving."

The sacraments are the means through which God's grace is made real to us. We do this together, as the people of God, through the Lord's Supper and baptism, and we thank God for His grace and mercy. When we participate in the sacraments we are united with Christ through the Holy Spirit. Because we are a community of believers, the body of Christ, and not simply individuals with similar beliefs, we partake of the sacraments in the church in community. It is here that we join with all the saints: past, present, and future in our worship and praise.

Through the sacrament of baptism, we are received into God's church and we are set apart to live our lives as witnesses to the grace of God. Through the seal of baptism we belong to God forever. In baptism, God signifies to us that as the water washes away dirt from our bodies, the blood of Christ washes away the "dirt" from our souls. Through the Holy Spirit, the blood of Christ, represented in the waters of baptism, washes us clean from our sins and transforms us into children of God. It is not the water which cleanses our souls, but the blood of Christ. Just as Christ shed His blood once for all time, we are baptized only once because we are born into righteousness only once.¹

In the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, we receive the promises made in baptism. The elements of bread and wine represent for us the body and blood of Christ, which is the nourishment we receive from Him. In taking the bread and wine, we are assured that the sacrifice of Christ was sufficient and efficacious. Our faith is confirmed in our union with Christ. In the Supper, Christ offers himself to us and we receive him in faith. The nourishment we receive is eternal. Christ no longer is at a distance, he is present and available to us in communion. Just as we truly can take the real bread and wine in our hands, so we also can take the true body and blood of Christ into our souls. The Heidelberg Catechism teaches that seeing the actual bread and wine helps us to experience personally the communion we have with Christ.²

As we begin a new year, my hope is that our community will experience the grace and love of God in new and surprising ways, both through the sacraments, and one another.

Peace to you,
Pastor Amy

¹ Belgic Confession, Article 34

² [Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A # 75.](#)

Round Table of Thanks:

- A. Living Nativity – Elaine Sinacore, Paul Sinacore, Tracey Lynch Rick & Enaida Mayer, Dan Keefe, George Pritchard, Rob Herbert, Bob Willis Nancy Schunk, the youth group, all the actors and singers and anyone else who participated. All your efforts are greatly appreciated.
- B. Sally, Paul, Rich & Marcia for filling 4 wonderful Thanksgiving baskets
- C. Rick Mayer for the turkeys for the baskets
- D. Afternoon Guild for apple pies for the baskets
- E. Afternoon Guild for Christmas Women's luncheon
- F. Paul Sinacore, deacon and Jan Dyckman, elder for their dedicated service on Consistory.
- G. Linda Acevedo and Lynn Meyer for decorating the sanctuary with poinsettias.
- H. Sally Kingston for communion preparation.
- I. Jan Dyckman for draping the cross and for his Christmas Eve musical gift.
- J. The choir and Alice Avouris for beautiful Christmas Eve music
- K. Rick and Joe Mayer for their generosity
- L. Carole Ann Scarnati, Susan Turner, George Pritchard, Elaine Sinacore, Jan Dyckman, Harmen Bakker for participation in the Christmas Eve service

**Women's Afternoon
Prayer Group
Meeting each Friday
at 12:30pm
In the quiet space of Hilliard Room
Come join us on Fridays**



Annual Congregational Meeting

Our Congregational Mtg. will be Sunday, January 22nd after worship. It is important for all members to attend. Issues will be discussed and new consistory members elected.

"Cultivating Quiet"

Would you like to step back from your busy schedule and explore what gifts a time of silence can bring to your life?

Women's Retreat

February 17-18, 2012
Stony Brook Retreat Center
Stony Point, NY

\$100 - includes Room (double occupancy) Meals and Program

*Retreat is led by Kitty Ufford-Chase,
Co-Director of the Center*

In an environment of mutual support, participants in this retreat are encouraged to empty themselves of agendas, obligations and goals, and just allow themselves to be, to become comfortable with the quiet and to experience what happens.

See Pastor Amy for details

Please note there are scholarships available - please speak with Pastor Amy

Soup Kitchen Fellowship

I would like to thank Alice for shipping, Rick for delivering the food and Jeannie for baking beautiful cupcakes and a cake. Marcia was able to serve the food in December. Thank you to those who roasted turkeys; Marcia, Jan, George, Carol Ann and Chris and Harry.

Our December cooks were George, June, Jeannie, Laura, Marco, Dian, Mariah, Nicholas, Susan, Marcia, Ben and Gene.

Please join us on Wednesday, January 18th at 4:30 p.m. as we prepare beef stew for the soup kitchen in Peekskill. 1-2 volunteers are needed to serve the food that we prepare on the third Thursday of each month, 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. at the Salvation Army, 117 Nelson Ave., Peekskill.

The enthusiastic and abundant help in December was a real joy!!!

Marcia

CLASSIS MEETING – JANUARY 17th

We will be hosting the quarterly Classis Meeting on Tuesday, January 17th at 5:00 p.m. All ordained Elders are invited to attend. There will be a meeting, dinner, student exams and worship.

January

- 2 Tyler Schunk
William Small
- 3 Derek DeLaBarrera
- 9 Daniel Rosenthal
- 11 Katie Meyer
Eddy Levesque
Nicholas Scarnati
- 20 Audrey Dinkler
- 21 Joseph Guevarez
- 24 Norman Haight
- 27 Gene D'Onofrio
- 28 Julien Levesque
- 31 Helen Schlurensauer



World Day of Prayer



Our church is the host for World Day of Prayer in 2012. It will be celebrated on Friday, March 2nd at 11:00 a.m. A luncheon will follow the service. Help is needed to read portions of the service, usher, sing, accompany singers and help is also needed to provide food for the luncheon, set up and clean up. Please see Marcia if you can help in some way.

This service is a wonderful opportunity to worship with other Christian women in our community, pray for others, and enjoy a meal and fellowship together.

Marcia

January Dates to Remember



- Wednesday, Jan. 4th - 7:00 p.m. Cortlandtown Group
- Monday, Jan. 9th – 1:00 p.m. Afternoon Guild Meeting
- Monday, January 9th – 7:30 p.m. Cemetery Committee Mtg.
- Tuesday, Jan. 10th – 7:00 p.m. Consistory Meeting
- Wednesday, Jan. 11th – 7:00 p.m. Cortlandtown Group
- Friday, Jan. 13th – 7:00 – Dual Diagnosis Group
- Tuesday, Jan. 17th – 5:00 p.m. Classis Meeting
- Wednesday, Jan. 18th – 4:30 p.m. Soup Kitchen Fellowship
- Wednesday, Jan. 18th – 6:30 p.m. Bible Study
- Friday, Jan. 20th – 7:00 – Dual Diagnosis Group
- Sunday, Jan. 22nd – 11:15 a.m. Congregational Mtg.
- Wednesday, Jan. 25th – 6:30 p.m. Bible Study
- Wednesday, Jan. 25th – 7:00 p.m. Cortlandtown Group
- Friday, Jan. 27th – 7:00 – Dual Diagnosis Group

The Dog's Christmas

Melanie Bussel

It was cold and clear that night. There wasn't any moon, but the great star we'd been seeing seemed even brighter than before. It cast a cold, almost shadowless glow over the hills. Even the shepherds, without my night vision could see the grazing sheep. We'd had some trouble with wolves that year and a lion had snatched a sheep a few weeks before. But all was quiet that night. The shepherds, even Yochanan, my master, were dozing, huddled around their fire.

Suddenly, I heard a faint noise. Actually, I didn't hear it so much as feel it. The fur inside my ears vibrated as I turned them this way and that, trying to determine where the sound was coming from. It kept getting louder. Although loud noises can sometimes hurt my ears, this didn't; it just kind of enveloped me. I didn't sense any danger, but I barked once, sharply, to alert my master and the others that something very strange was happening.

As the men and boys were struggling to wake, there was a brilliant light, brighter even than sunshine at midday. And we could see beings in the radiance, huge and glowing. The shepherds fell on the ground, terrified, but I stayed up, wagging my tail happily because I knew they meant no harm to us. I heard Yochanan mutter that they were angels, terrible and mighty beings sent from God. But he stayed down, with his face in the grass.

Then one angel, larger and more shining than the others hovered just above our heads. In a voice like thunder, but sweeter than the shepherds' pipes, it said, "Do not be afraid. We are here to bring good news! Today, for the salvation of all, God has sent his son into the world. You can find him in Bethlehem, lying in a stable."

And then, all the angels called out, "Glory to God in the highest and peace to all people on earth."

Then, as they had appeared, as quickly as a candle is snuffed out, they disappeared. And we were all left wondering about what it meant.

The head shepherd, Noach, said, "Look where the star is shining. It's not so far to Bethlehem. The flock is quiet and we were told to see this child of God. The angels will see that the sheep come to no harm." So they put out the fire and, wrapping themselves in their robes, started the trek down to the town.

Nobody paid me any mind, so I slipped in next to Yochanan and went with them. I could smell that there were no wolves around, but I wasn't so sure about the men in Bethlehem. I had seen the crowds heading there for the Roman census. Where there are crowds, there are usually brigands. So I tagged along to protect them. And because I really wanted to see the Baby.

Except for the Star shine, the streets of Bethlehem were really dark and pretty soon, I led the way. Because of my night vision and sense of smell, I could lead them to the stable quickly. I could sense the aura from the angels right over the center of town. When we arrived, it was very late. There was no movement outside the inn, but I showed them the route around back where guests kept horses, donkeys and animals destined for market. I nosed my way through the flap that served as a door and the shepherds followed me in.

There, by the light of flickering oil lamp was a very young mother holding a newborn baby. The father hovered over her protectively. There seemed to be a glow around the child and each shepherd, Noach first, followed by Yochanan came forward and quietly knelt before the Mother and Son. I snuck my head in and gave a very gentle lick to His tiny hand. I swear He smiled at me.

Then Mary asked how the men knew about the birth. Then all the shepherds jumped up and started talking at once about the star and the angels and the message given by the head angel to seek the baby born that night in a stable, for He was the Redeemer of the World. She smiled and held up the Baby for all of them to see. They fell silent and knelt again in homage to their King.

Then, silently, they filed out for the long walk back to their sheep. I stayed for a moment longer and Mary reached out and scratched me behind my ears the way I love it. And the Baby stretched out his hand and touched my nose.

I ran all the way back to the hills to be sure nothing had bothered my sheep. I will never forget His tender touch.