



December 2009

# SPIRIT IN THE PARK

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE MORGAN PARK UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

## Dear Friends...

For many, many years I have been wondering why Lectionary Bible readings of the Advent season always start with the so-called "End Time" teachings of Jesus. This year I feel like I understand the "why." This year I feel like I see the signs of the end time everywhere (please understand that I am not a wacky dispensationalist). Our nation is still engaged in two wars and we hear rumors that dangerous nuclear weapons are in dangerous peoples' hands. The news of earthquakes and tsunamis shock us too often. Unbelievable violence and even killings happen almost everyday in our neighborhoods. The melt down of the economy effects almost every one of us with unemployment, foreclosure of houses, and emotional breakdowns. I am wondering how we will have a happy Thanksgiving and a merry Christmas.

I sit down and try to breathe deeply. Then I realize that Jesus came to the earth, more specifically to the land of Israel, when the whole nation of Israel was going to the end time of their history. The oppression of the Roman Empire was at its peak and the corrupted Jerusalem Temple was on the brink of destruction. Everyone's life was difficult. People suffered with rumors of wars, violence, natural disasters, and economic meltdown. Jesus, the incarnated God, came to that suffering land and people as the Prince of Peace. What an irony that is!

This year I will write many thanksgiving notes and Christmas cards to people who are hurting, distressed, angry and giving up hope. I will remind them and myself that the world we are living in now is like the "End Time" and the Prince of Peace is with us because we are suffering. The peace he gives to us is different from anything that the world can give to us. The peace he gives to us is the power to create the new earth and the new heaven. Hopefully, we experience that new earth and new heaven in our church and families because the Prince of Peace is with us.

Are you ready to write Christmas cards with merry messages in Christ? Let us remember people who are really hurting and feeling hopelessness when we pray, worship, eat, share the gifts, and write Christmas cards. Merry Christmas with the blessings of the Prince of Peace to you!  
- Pastor Eun-Hye Choi

### DECEMBER ADVENT & CHRISTMAS WORSHIP CALENDAR

Worship Theme: Peace

**DECEMBER 6**

#### THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Communion

Malachi 3:1-4 and Luke 3:1-6

Sermon: "The Messenger of the Covenant"

**DECEMBER 13**

#### THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Christmas Drama

Zephaniah 3:14-20 and Luke 3:7-18

Sermon: "God Is in Your Midst"

**DECEMBER 20**

#### THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Children's & Youth Christmas Program

Micah 5:2-5a and Luke 1:39-45

Sermon title: "Rejoice"

**DECEMBER 24**

#### CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE

7:30 p.m.

Traditional Carols & Lessons

Holy Communion



**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24<sup>TH</sup>**

**7:30 p.m.**

**Evening Candlelight Service  
With Traditional "Carols & Lessons"  
Special Music and Holy Communion**

## Christmas Card Tree



Many years ago we began the practice of having a Christmas Card Tree in the parlor. The tree provides a place for members and friends of the congregation to share a greeting card with others in the church. The idea was to also save money on cards and postage by not sending individual cards to others in the church and to give the money saved to missions. We would like to encourage everyone in the church to bring a card and place it on the tree as your way of greeting your church family. If you wish to share a monetary gift with missions it can be placed in the offering marked "Christmas card gift".

## DRAMA MINISTRY

### "The Long Awaited Messiah" Sunday, December 13, 2009

On Sunday, December 13, 2009, the Drama Group will perform a one act Advent play by Shirley Butler titled, "The Long Awaited Messiah". The play looks at the prophecies of Jeremiah, Malachi and Isaiah, and discusses the meaning of the coming of the Messiah.

The play will take place during the Sunday worship service. We hope everyone will come and support the Drama Group's ministry. We also hope that you will find the play thought provoking and meaningful for your lives.



### COMMUNITY FOOD PANTRY NEEDS

Donate \$15 this Christmas season and you will provide a full turkey dinner for a needy family to enjoy in their home. Please make your checks payable to MPUMC with a designation of "Food Pantry" and we will forward your donation.

## THANK YOU...THANK YOU...THANK YOU!

*Submitted by Anne Genther*

The Outreach Team thanks you for your generous support of the many activities that have been held this fall.

Through the Spaghetti Lunch, Current Catalog Sale, and Avon Sale we have raised over \$700.00 for our Rainbow Covenant projects. Watch the January newsletter to see our total mission giving for 2009. A special thank you to Lisa Rock, Pat Bayer's daughter, for her generous gift of her profits from the Avon Sale.

Also this fall you gave to the Crop Walk to fight hunger. The Crop Walk did not have as many walkers as we have had in the past but those who were able to participate enjoyed themselves and raised needed funds (\$1,049.00) to fight hunger through Church World Service.

## ORDER YOUR POINSETTIAS

Once again we will be displaying our poinsettias throughout the entire Advent/Christmas season. Please use the enclosed order form and please remember that color choice is only guaranteed on orders placed early.



### MARCY NEWBERRY CHRISTMAS GIFT COLLECTION

The deadline for bringing gifts to be given to Marcy Newberry Association, a United Methodist social service agency serving the west side of Chicago, is December 6<sup>th</sup> so that the gifts can be delivered in time for the Christmas parties being held. The staff tries to be sure that each participant gets a gift for Christmas – including babies to senior citizens. A box is in the parlor to receive your gifts. Any type gift will be welcome.

If you have questions see Elaine Reynolds, Anne Genther or call the church office.

Sunday School & Youth Group  
**CHRISTMAS PAGEANT**  
Sunday, December 20<sup>th</sup>

**“Is It Really Christmas?”**



*Please plan to attend and don't forget to invite your family and friends to see the play.*

**CHILDREN'S DECEMBER SCHEDULE**

**REHEARSAL**

Saturday, December 12<sup>th</sup>  
9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

**CHILDREN'S LUNCHEON AND MOVIE**

Saturday, December 12<sup>th</sup>  
11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

*Mothers can attend  
UMW luncheon during this time.*

**REHEARSAL**

Saturday, December 19<sup>th</sup>  
9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

**CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PARTY**

Saturday, December 19<sup>th</sup>  
11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

*Children planning on participating in this year's  
Christmas program must attend rehearsals.*

**TEEN BIBLE STUDY**

*Submitted by Micah Briggs, Youth Pastor*

This Bible study is a dual-purpose tool designed to connect with the youth of our church body while simultaneously engaging in outreach by extending the invitation to youth in our surrounding community.

The study will break down the foundational Biblical basics of the Bible (creation, fall, flood, exodus, judges, and the foreshadowing of the Messiah) then lead into the birth, life, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This study is an effort to explain some of the non-negotiable details of the Word of God in a contextually relevant fashion, which will touch on the cultural influences for today's teens. The hope for this Bible study is to provide youth with a general understanding of God's design for man while explaining its relevance to today's rapidly evolving culture.

**THE BLUEPRINT FOR THE BIBLE STUDY:**

- Duration: 95 minutes (5:30 p.m. – 7:05 p.m.)
- Location: MPUMC Church (youth study room, computer lab, and the gym when available)
- Tools: Bibles, paper & pens
- Necessities: Snacks & Drinks (low sodium baked chips, flavored water, granola bars etc...)

\*For more information please see Micah Briggs.

**“A Miracle Prayer”**

*Submitted By Shirley Butler*

While on vacation in Wisconsin in October, I visited a quaint little restaurant called The Cheese Factory. At the checkout counter there was a basket containing a handout titled “A Miracle Prayer”. I was impressed enough with the prayer that I want to share it with you.

“And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”



“Dear Heavenly Father....The holy Christ is born in me today. Watch with me, angels, watch with me today. Let all God's holy thoughts surround me, and be still with me while Heaven's Son is born. Let earthly sounds be quiet, and the sights to which I am accustomed disappear. Let Christ be welcomed where He is at home. And let Him hear the sounds He understands, and see but sights that show His Father's Love. Let Him no longer be a stranger here, for he is born again in me today.” Amen

## WHY DO WE NEED TO BECOME A RECONCILING CONGREGATION?

*Submitted by Don Jaburek  
Reconciling Committee Chair*



*(Demonstrators from Westboro Baptist Church in Kansas protest across the street from Sidwell Friends; students hold a counter-protest.) www.godhatesfags.com*

"Why do we need to become a Reconciling Congregation since we are inclusive already?" This is a question that has been put to me as chair of the Reconciling Committee. If our congregation would become a Reconciling Congregation, we would clearly and specifically state as our mission statement:

"To witness to the World lovingly and justly as servants of Jesus by healing, caring, embracing, reconciling and providing a safe sanctuary for all people.

Therefore, we open our hearts, our minds, and our doors to all persons of any age, sex, race, ethnic origin, economic reality, family status, sexual orientation, gender identity, education, mental or physical ability, or social standing as full participants in the life and work of this reconciling congregation."

The message has to be very specific as long as so many Christian Churches express hatred for our brothers and sisters in Christ (as witnessed in the picture above)! We need to open our hearts, minds and doors as long as children and teens are choosing suicide due to rejection by their church and rejection by their family based on "religion."

When Jesus said to let the children come to Him, he didn't put any limitations on His request and His love. "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. As I have loved you, you should also love one another" John 13:34. God's love (agape love) has no limits and is unconditional. As Christians and as members of a loving Christian community, we must shout from the mountaintops with a clear and unambiguous message of God's Love and our Love of ALL persons so that ALL know our welcome applies to them.

## ETHNIC YOUNG ADULT INTERNSHIPS

May 30 – July 31st in Washington D.C.

The deadline to apply for the 2010 Ethnic Young Adult (EYA) Summer Internship in Washington D.C. is December 15, 2009. The program is designed for young adults between the ages of 18 – 22 who would like to explore issues of public policy, social justice advocacy, and social change.

Sponsored by the United Methodist Inter-Ethnic Strategy Development Group (IESDG), the program will send interns to social justice placements from May 30 – July 31, 2010.

Applicants must be (a) in good academic standing at their college/university, (b) demonstrate evidence of their concern for social justice through extracurricular activity and academic study, and (c) have some history of involvement in their church and/or community. If interested prospective interns are already full-timed employed, applicants need to show leadership and participation in their local church and community revolving around social justice activities.

Round-trip transportation, eight-weeks of housing, commuter stipends for travel to intern work sites, and \$1,500 for each intern for the eight-week period will be provided.

For more information, contact the Rev. Neal Christie (nchristie@umc-gbcs.org), assistant general secretary, Education & Leadership Formation, General Board of Church & Society, 100 Maryland Ave. NE, Washington, D.C. 20002, (202) 488-5611 or the Rev. L.A. McCrae (lmccrae@umc-gbcs.org), EYA coordinator, (202) 488-5644 (office) or (443) 528-5138 (mobile).

Additional information and links to the applications are available on the following site:

<http://www.umc-gbcs.org/site/apps/nlnet/>

## Northern Illinois Conference UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

Applications for Northern Illinois Conference scholarships for the 2010/11 school year are now available! You can download a copy from the Conference web site: (<http://www.umcnic.org> - Click on "Ministries", then click on "Higher Education & Campus Ministry"), request the attachment as an E-mail or fax, or ask for a copy to be mailed to you.

The main contact is Mrs. Gladys King-Lucas, Marcy-Newberry Association, 1073 W. Maxwell Street, Chicago, IL 60608 (312-829-7555 ext. 118, [mnagkl@aol.com](mailto:mnagkl@aol.com)) If you are considering applying, please send in your applications now so as to avoid a last minute rush. The postmark deadline is April 1, 2010.



## Christmas Jazz & Brunch

Hosted by  
Morgan Park U.M.C. Youth  
Ministry

Sunday, December 13, 2009

Great Hall  
Following Worship

*The Brunch provides*

***Fun...Food...Fellowship***

*among our congregation while also providing an opportunity for the congregation to support our youth and to participate in raising funds for our Youth Ministry mission trip.*

### HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF

*Submitted by Pat Hawkins*

We are all familiar with the phrase history repeats itself; we, here at MPUMC, are getting ready to do just that. We are reinstating the Caring Committee with a new name, CARING MINISTRY CREW. Even though we are a congregation that does care about one another, we feel that there needs to be a specific group that is responsible for making sure that certain things occur.

**The Caring Ministry Crew would be responsible for the following:**

**PRAYER** – We have a prayer group that meets weekly, but we do not always know about everyone who needs prayer. We pray for those whom we know are ill, and for those lifted up during Sunday service. There are others who do not feel comfortable asking for prayers in public. We will use a prayer box and/or have designated persons that those requesting prayer can talk with. These persons or situations will be prayed for every week. (Time involved 1 hour per week from home)

**HOME BOUND** – We need men and women who are willing to visit those who are unable to get out and about. You would visit those who are at home, in assisted living facilities, and in nursing homes. Visits would not be lengthy, probably between fifteen minutes and one-half hour.

**HOSPITAL VISITS** – We need people to visit our members who are hospitalized. Before representing MPUMC as a hospital visitor, Pastor Eun-Hye will give instructions for visiting those in the hospital.

**NOTE AND CARD WRITERS** – We need people of all ages (youth and children, too) who care about our church members to write notes and send cards to the following: those who are ill and at home, those who are in the hospital, those who have experienced the loss of a loved one, those who have a new baby or who have adopted a child.

**JUST TO KEEP IN TOUCH** – We need people to keep in touch with those students who are away in college, those members who have temporarily moved away, and those members who have reached a milestone in their lives and should receive a card from the church family, we are also thinking of sending birthday cards or giving a birthday call.

**SUNDAY CARDS** – We need people to send postcards to those in the congregation who have missed more than two Sundays and are ordinarily in church on Sunday. We also want to send postcards to those who have visited us. The Caring Group will provide these post cards.

We would like to start this group before the New Year begins. If you are interested in becoming a part of this "crew," please see Pat Hawkins, Laura Parker or Gertrude Preyar; of course, you can also let pastor Choi know. We must let others know that we care about them whether they are in church or not. After all, Jesus did command us to love our neighbors as ourselves. As a church family we need to show this care and concern. Please consider giving an hour or so every week to let others know that their church family cares about them.

### CHILDREN'S ADVENT FESTIVAL 2009 Crafting & Special Treats



**SUNDAY DECEMBER 6<sup>TH</sup>**  
During Sunday School Time

United Methodist Women  
**Christmas  
Celebration**

Saturday, December 12<sup>th</sup>  
11:00 a.m. - Parlor



*Join us for a time of spiritual fulfillment  
as well as a time of fellowship and food.*

For more information contact:  
Trudy Hill (773-233-0435)  
Anne Genther (773-881-1788)

**DECEMBER ACOLYTES**

Dec. 6... Christopher Parker and Will Zopp  
Dec. 13... Kaline Langley and Carinne Parker  
Dec. 20... Sydney Cerrentano and Denise Parker  
Dec. 27... Marissa Johnson and Pierre Parker

**SHIVA AND THE NEPAL ORPHANAGE**

*Submitted by Carolyn McPherson*

During December and January, I'll be visiting Nepal and India, and will have the opportunity to visit Shiva, the young man our Church is helping to support, at the Orphanage. He lives with many other children, who also are victims of the terrible Maoist insurgency in rural Nepal—a military action that resulted in parents being killed or forced into the Maoist army, and children being turned loose to wander the countryside. Shiva was one of the lucky ones who were brought by unknown persons to the capital, Kathmandu. Subsequently he found his way to an Orphanage, and has been cared for ever since in increasingly supportive situations.

He is now a happy young man, about 14 years old, living with several hundred others in the same situation. He attends school, a private English-language school. I am a bit embarrassed that his command of English is far superior to my command of Nepali—but at least we have one language in common. Occasionally I receive an email from him, and he always sends his love to "Morgan Park Church." Each of us is a presence and a blessing in his life.

When I return in January, I'll bring pictures of Shiva and his friends to share with you. We'll then begin raising money to support Shiva for another year. In the meantime, please send him your prayers as he matures into the sort of young man who eventually will live happily and productively in his home country.

**MANY THANKS**

*Submitted by Laura Parker, Co-chair Nurture Team*

Thanks to Micah Briggs, young people, and all the crew that organized and coordinated the Talent Show and supper. Thanks also to Micah for bringing in new young people to the church through his basketball ministry. This ministry has the potential of changing the lives of young people in our community. *(We need more volunteers for this program. Please see Pastor or Micah to volunteer.)*

Thank you to Pat Hawkins for volunteering to chair the Caring Ministries of the church. Responsibilities include visiting sick members, keeping connections with young people who move away or go to college, contacting people who are missing on Sunday, and otherwise caring for individuals in the church.

Thank you to Nursery and Sunday School teachers who are always ready to teach our children on Sunday mornings.

Thank you to Arlene McGee for being flexible in providing Safe Sanctuary Training for church volunteers. *(If you are interested in helping in ministries to children and youth in the church, please be sure to contact her for the training. We want to ensure that all of us know the policies and procedures to follow in order to make sure our kids are safe while in our care.)*

**CELL PHONE & INK JET CARTRIDGE  
RECYCLING**

*Submitted by Lisa Butler, Exodus Group*

Thanks to all for continuing to bring in phones and cartridges. Keep those cell phones and ink jet cartridges coming! We need more to send a full shipment. Cell phones do not need to be in working condition to be recycled.

Wondering what to do with those old cell phones you have under the bed collecting dust? What about that used ink jet cartridge you just replaced in your printer, don't throw it away. Recycle your old cell phone and ink jet cartridges at MPUMC. Phones can be donated to shelters for emergency use, or distributed in areas worldwide without access to telephones.

What makes recycling your cell phone or ink jet cartridges with MPUMC so special? A percentage of the proceeds from the recycled phones and ink jet cartridges will be distributed to our neighborhood charities. By recycling you can help someone and the environment as well! Spread the word. Tell your family, friends and co-workers to donate too. Donations can be brought to the church on Sundays or to the church office between 9:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. Monday-Friday.