

Reflections

B E T J E A F I O N S

from
the
Valley

Valley Presbyterian Church
Newsletter

Volume 33, Number 10

December 2014–January 2015



The Kingdom

It's a long way off but inside it
There are quite different things going on:
Festivals at which the poor man
Is king and the consumptive is
Healed; mirrors in which the blind look
At themselves and love looks at them
Back; and industry is for mending
The bent bones and the minds fractured
By life. It's a long way off, but to get
There takes no time and admission
Is free, if you purge yourself
Of desire, and present yourself with
Your need only and the simple offering
Of your faith, green as a leaf.

~ R.S. Thomas

December 2014 – January 2015 Worship Notes

December 7th – Second Sunday of Advent – Communion

Isaiah 40:1-11
Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13

2 Peter 3:8-15a
Mark 1:1-8

December 14th – Third Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11
Psalm 126 or
Luke 1:46b-55

I Thessalonians 5:16-24
John 1:6-8, 19-28

December 21st – Fourth Sunday of Advent

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16
Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26 or
Luke 1:46b-55

Romans 16:25-27
Luke 1:26-38

December 24th – Christmas Eve – 5 PM – Worship for All

All are welcome as we recount Jesus' birth, sing carols, and light candles to remember the Light that came into the world.

Isaiah 9:2-7
Psalm 96

Titus 2:11-14
Luke 2:1-14 (15-20)

December 28th – First Sunday after Christmas Day – PJ & Bells

Join us for an informal service for the whole family! Wear your PJs and slippers, grab a bell at the door, and together we'll listen to the Christmas story and sing our favorite carols.

Isaiah 61:10-62:3
Psalm 148

Galatians 4:4-7
Luke 2:22-40

January 4th – Epiphany - Star Gifts Sunday - Communion

Jeremiah 31:7-14
Psalm 147:12-20

Ephesians 1:3-14
John 1(1-9) 10-18

January 11th – Baptism of the Lord

Genesis 1:1-5
Psalm 29

Acts 19:1-7
Mark 1:4-11

January 18th – Second Sunday after Epiphany

I Samuel 3:1-10 (11-20)
Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18

I Corinthians 6:12-20
John 1:43-51

January 25th – Third Sunday after Epiphany

Jonah 3:1-5, 10
Psalm 62:5-12

I Corinthians 7:29-31
Mark 1:14-20



Advent and Christmas at Valley

First Sunday of Advent ~ Nov 30 ~ Hope

Doing Sunday

Rev. Adele will offer a reflection and then together we will assemble bags for newborns to be given to Women, Infants and Children (WIC) in Danbury.

CHASM Road Trip ~ Fri, Dec 5 - Sat, Dec 6

Our young people are headed to Broad Street Ministry in Philadelphia with our friends from United Presbyterian in Milford. Please keep us in your prayers!

Second Sunday of Advent ~ Dec 7 ~ Peace

Celebration of Rev. Ann Beams, Pastor Emerita

Rev. Ann will preach and Rev. Adele will preside in worship as we recognize our former pastor for her faithful ministry among us. A reception in Ann's honor will follow.

Third Sunday of Advent ~ Dec 14 ~ Joy

Between Memory and Hope ~ 9:15-9:45 AM

A quiet service of prayer, meditation, scripture and song to honor the events of 12/14.

Love Fest ~ 11 AM

Following 10 AM worship, we will celebrate the love we have in Christ by sharing it with the world. Choose from ornament making, cookie decorating (to take to folks when we carol), birthday blessing bags for the kids at Danbury Women's Shelter, and alternative gift giving. Love wins! Alleluia!

Cookie Exchange ~ Wed, Dec 17

Enjoy the treats of the season without having to make them all! Please bring ½ dozen of your own goodies for each person.

Breakfast with Santa ~ Sat, Dec 20, 11 AM

Youngsters, come to celebrate the season! Who knows...maybe the guy in red will show up? Family and friends welcome. Please RSVP to Megan Christian.

Fourth Sunday of Advent ~ Dec 21 ~ Love

Festival Worship

Our Youth Ensemble, Handbells and Choir offer special anthems of the season.

Caroling, Cookies & Cocoa ~ Sun, Dec 21, 4-6 PM

Bring your smile, your voice and bundle up to sing carols of the season to those in our community. We will enjoy some yummy treats upon our return to church. **NOTE NEW TIME**

Christmas Eve ~ Wed, Dec 24

Candlelight Worship ~ 5 PM

We'll gather for familiar scriptures and favorite carols announcing Christ's birth. Children are invited to join our no-fuss Christmas Pageant; simply arrive by 4:30 PM, and choose a costume.

First Sunday of Christmas ~ Dec 28

PJs & Bells

Come in your pajamas or comfy clothes for this fun, family-friendly version of Lessons & Carols. And bring your leftover Christmas sweets for Coffee Hour!

Epiphany Sunday ~ Jan 4

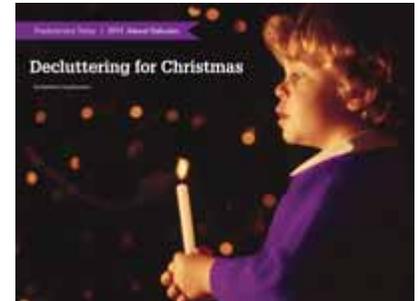
Star Gifts

Celebrate God's guiding light by hearing how VPC members were led by their stars last year, and choosing one of your own to follow throughout 2015.

Advent Devotionals

This year Mike Ecsedy, along with several other VPC contributors, has crafted an Advent Devotional built around Advent and Christmas carols. Beginning November 30, each week has a theme (hope, peace, joy, love) and each day a focus for prayer, reflection and meditation. If you would like to receive this devotional, it's not too late!! Please sign-up electronically by clicking the box in the Midweek Update or call the Church Office. You may choose to receive an electronic copy of the day's devotional in your inbox each day during Advent, or you may choose to receive a hard copy if you'd prefer.

Decluttering for Christmas is a perfect devotional booklet for families with young children. Time is at such a premium in our fast-paced lives that we never seem to have enough of it to accomplish all that we want, especially in our families! At the same time, children "can't wait" for Christmas to arrive. These daily activities and prayers offer families a practical way to step back from the rush and remember the One for whom we are waiting.



Decluttering for Christmas was mailed to families and is a gift from the Worship Committee. Please call Terri in the Church Office if you did not receive your copy.

PraiseMoves – A New Ministry at Valley

We're off to a great start with the new PraiseMoves ministry at Valley. Our first classes in November were well attended and everyone left the session feeling uplifted and strengthened in body and spirit under the able tutorage of Elizabeth Adam, our certified PraiseMoves Instructor. If you didn't get a chance to sign up but would like to try it ... no worries! Come Saturday morning at 9 am and join us for a one-time class at \$12 each. (Please note there will be no class on December 27th.) Or, if you'd like to try after the holidays, a new session of eight classes will start in January. The cost for all eight classes will be \$80 (\$10 per class) or \$12 per class for walk-ins. Each class starts promptly at 9 am and ends at 10 am.



PraiseMoves is a Christian alternative to yoga in which scriptural readings are incorporated into the routine. Postures are suited for all levels of fitness ... everyone is welcome, so invite your friends and neighbors. Call Terri Flanagan in the Church Office to register (203-775-2624).



Music to be offered in December and January:

December 7th

Handbell Prelude: "Savior Of The Nations, Come" John A. Behnke

Anthem: "Come, Dear Christ, Your World Awaits" Bonnie Duckworth

December 14th

Handbell Prelude: "O Come, All Ye Faithful" ADESTE FIDELES, arr. Patricia Sanders Cota

Anthem: "Jesus, the Son of Mary" Sam Batt Owens

Kenneth MacKay, handbells

December 21st

Youth Music Ensemble: "Come Emmanuel" Twila Paris

Anthem: "The Wexford Carol" arranged by Howard Helvey

December 24th – CHRISTMAS EVE at 5 pm

Handbell Prelude: "Angels and Shepherds" Linda R. Lamb, based on the Bohemian Carol

Anthem: "Ding Dong! Merrily on High" Larry Shackley

Kenneth MacKay, percussion

Anthem: "Away in a Manger" arranged by Susan Nelson

January 4th

Anthem: "Were You There on that Christmas Night?" Natalie Sleeth

January 11th

Anthem: "The Sinless One To Jordan Came" arr. Timothy Blickhan

January 18th

Anthem: "He Comes to Us" Jane Marshall

January 25th

Anthem: "Ain't That Good News?" Moses Hogan



You're Invited to:

Community Caroling & Concert - A Christmas Celebration of Song

Enjoy hearing the Church Choirs of Brookfield
(including the Bell Choir of Congregational Church of Brookfield)

Sing-A-Long of Your Favorite Carols

Sunday, December 7th – 2 PM

St. Joseph's Church, Brookfield

Session Notes

November saw more growth in membership. Valley is pleased to accept Krissi Morris into active membership and to enroll her children Taylor (16), Zoe (14) and Zach (9) Zigenfuss as baptized members.

Many things of significance happened in November including the Stewardship Campaign and the Election of the next class of Elders and Deacon. It was also the first month in about 20 years with no income from the Montessori School.

A Congregational meeting was held on November 23rd with three primary objectives. The first was for the Nominating Committee to present their recommendations for the Elders and Deacons for the Class of 2017 and to fill one slot in the Class of 2016 vacated by Cindy Sloat. The Book of Order describes the church's ministries as follows:

G-2.0102 Ordered Ministries

The Church's ordered ministries described in the New Testament and maintained by this church are deacons and presbyters (teaching elders and ruling elders). Ordered ministries are gifts to the church to order its life so that the ministry of the whole people of God may flourish...

Valley is truly graced with many individuals who are willing to give these gifts and to serve as Elders and Deacons. Those elected include:

Judy Cunningham To be installed as an Elder (Class of 2017)

Walter Manuel To be Ordained and installed as an Elder (Class of 2016)

Lea Attanasio To be installed as a Deacon (Class of 2017)

We are grateful that Judy and Lea agreed to serve another three year term and look forward to the ordination and service of Walter. Two Elder positions remain vacant for the class of 2017. While service on either the Session or the Board of Deacons is a large commitment, there are also big rewards for the individuals as well as the congregation.

The second objective was the elections to fill the four Congregation at large positions on the Nominating Committee. Those elected include Kate Henriques, Tricia Johnson, Lori Peck and Georgiann Sutor.

For the third major objective, the treasurer Jeff Henriques provided an initial overview of this year's stewardship campaign – more details will be in the Treasurer's report. At the top level, it's great to note that a large number of Valley members increased their pledges. Even so, Valley is facing another deficit budget and will be further eating into its reserves.

Session and the Finance Committee continue to seek ways to achieve a balanced budget. We know that God has led this congregation through difficult times in the past and have faith that God will help us this time as well.

MISSION DECEMBER/JANUARY, 2015

- ANGEL TREE IS UP -- We are collecting gifts for three families so far. There are guidelines on the small table just beyond the tree. The “wish envelopes” will contain the identifying codes for each of the families with a tag outlining the requested gift for each member of each family. Gifts should not exceed \$30.00 each.
- SALVATION ARMY KETTLE will be at Valley on December 7th. It is a locked kettle. Valley does not count or keep track of your donations. However, we are notified In January what has been received. Please note that the collection that we participate in with the other churches in Brookfield comes back to Brookfield Social Services and they use the funds for our neighbors’ emergency situations.



If you wish to donate by check, please make the check out to “Salvation Army” and indicate “Brookfield” on the memo line.

- Mission takes a little break in January (except for preparation of sandwiches and the meal pans for Dorothy Day Hospitality House) and then comes....
- SOUPER BOWL SUNDAY, February 1st,2015. We will again collect food items for one of our area food banks as most of them struggle again after the holidays. Mission Committee will host the coffee hour that Sunday as has been the norm for the last few years.....thinking it will be pulled pork sandwiches.



As we close out the year, the committee thanks all of you for your support of the sandwich making, the meal pans, our Romanian and Zambia outreaches, Chapel on the Green and all the ways we strive to make life better for our neighbors here and in the world.

We wish you a blessed Christmas and peace in the New Year.

Judy Cunningham
chair

Deacon News...

The boxes are stuffed and taped, ready to be sent off to our Valley college students. Each will be receiving a care package from the deacons filled with nutritious (and otherwise) snacks, toys, and notes to help them survive finals week. We look forward to seeing some of these college students in church over their winter breaks.

On behalf of Valley, the deacons will be able to provide assistance to a number of families in our local area during the upcoming holiday seasons. Thank you for supporting these efforts through your contributions made in the special envelopes provided on Communion Sundays.

"Valley's Stars on Stage" Returns!

Are you a closet magician, juggler, ballerina or tap dancer? Are you a wanna-be comedian, or a budding artist or musician? Do you have an act you'd just love to share with our Valley family? If so, then the second-annual, deacon-hosted, Valley Variety Show on Saturday, January 31 is for you. All acts (three minutes or less) are welcome - perform by yourself or with a group. Contact Terri in the office (valleypresct@gmail.com) or Lea Attanasio (leaattan@aol.com) to register your act.



Then, invite your friends and family to attend the show at Valley. All are welcome. Doors will open at 6:30 for dessert (ice cream sundaes). The show will begin at 7:00pm. Sign up sheets will soon be posted in the narthex to register your act and/or let us know you will be attending.

Psalm 128:5

May the Lord bless you... all the days of your life.

Notes from The Director of Family Ministries



On Sunday, November 9, Valley had their second annual Prayer Hike. The group parked and hiked from Lori Peck's house in Newtown, CT. She and her family led the hikers on a beautiful two hour trek through nature. They could not have asked for better weather. One quote I heard after the hike..."Gorgeous day for a walk with my church family!"

As of November 1, we've been asking for your participation in Valley's "Project Thankful". This project is geared towards focusing on gratitude in our everyday lives. Our aim is have Valley share moments, people, and things to be thankful for each time they come into the church. Project Thankful is all about expressing gratitude for what you value most in life and appreciating what we have in the present. You couldn't miss the thankful tree on your way into the church with new leaves added each week! I know it made me smile each and every time a saw it glowing and growing in that sun shiny corner!



December is filled holiday cheer and many opportunities to celebrate together.

On **December 14** after church in the narthex we will hold a Holiday Craft Boutique aka "Love Fest 2014". This is a time to create together in the holiday spirit. There will be several options of crafts and socializing to participate in on this Sunday in December.

Cookie Swap: On *Wednesday, December 17* at 4:30 pm, Valley will host a church Cookie Exchange. We will enjoy treats of the holiday season without the hassle of baking them ALL. Families participating will be asked to bring 1/2 dozen for each person registered (we will know numbers closer to the time). We will be making extra plates/platters of cookies to take caroling the following weekend.



Breakfast with Santa: We are planning this fun and much anticipated event for *Saturday, December 20* from 11:00-12:30. Please sign up in the Narthex with number of children and ages (as this makes Santa's preparation much easier). Join us for a morning of caroling, eating yummy breakfast foods, and the magic children bring to this holiday. Children of all ages are encouraged to come and participate. Contact *Megan Christian* if you would like to help with this event. We will need...



- Elves to serve breakfast to the children
- Elves to oversee a craft table
- Elves to assist Santa
- Elves to witness the pure joy of the Christmas season!!!

Caroling, Cookies, and Cocoa: Please join us in celebrating the season of Christmas by Caroling on Sunday, December 21st, from 4:00-6:00 pm! We'll deliver cookies made during our Cookie Swap, put a twinkle in someone's eye and then return to Valley for hot chocolate and fellowship! Sign up in the narthex.





Upcoming Events:

Valley's 1st Chili Cook-off: Sign up to make your famous chili, judge others' chili-making ability, or to just enjoy eating other people's chili!! Time and date to be determined.



Friends + Faith + Fitness = Fun: The theme of this faith building activity will be "Building Strength" in three important facets. All fitness levels will be welcome and accommodated for with each and every step!!! Come have fun with us and give that smile a workout! See *Megan Christian* for details. Time and date under consideration.

#1) Nutrition

#2) Physical Fitness

#3) Spiritual Strength

As always I would love to hear from you! What is working, what would you like to see more of, what did you love, what did you find ridiculous! :)

Megan Christian - Director of Family Ministries



Valley's Christian Education

Sunday School
Newsletter
2014

Merry Christmas Valley Sunday School!!

This Season of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany mark the beginning of a new church year as well as a special time in the lives of our children. It is a busy and exciting time of the year for them, with school Christmas concerts, holidays, and all the activities which begin in the new year. Their time at church will provide opportunities to learn about waiting during the Season of Advent, to celebrate on the Sundays of the Christmas season, and to learn more about Jesus and his ministry during the Season after the Epiphany.

While the holiday season is filled with enjoyable activities, events and traditions, it can also be a hectic and stressful time. Travel, shopping, loud music, bright lights, unfamiliar food, and busy schedules can turn typical routines upside down! The disruption to routine can be particularly difficult for children.

The following tips will help ensure that the holiday season is enjoyable for you and your child.

- Talk to your child about changes to the schedule and environment
- If you are going to decorate the house or bake special goodies, involve your child and make the tasks fun!



- Busy holiday calendars can leave adults and children worn out and stressed. When possible, balance times of high activity with calm, relaxed times. Try to spread activities out over the holiday season.
- Set aside time each night to use the wonderful Advent devotional for families put together by Presbyterians Today. Each day offers a very brief reflection, prayer, and opportunity for conversation with your young ones.

We hope this is helpful!!

Coming up:

Keep in mind there will be a No Stress, No Fuss Christmas Pageant on Christmas Eve. The worship service is scheduled for 5:00 pm, so if your children would like to participate please arrive at 4:30 pm. We are currently accepting résumé's for Pageant Narrators.



OUTREACH COMMITTEE

December 2014

Krissi Morris joined the Valley family November 30th by Reaffirmation of Faith and her three children Zoe (16), Taylor (14), and Zachary (9) were enrolled as Baptized Members. Krissi has been coming to Valley since August and is participating in Moms Group, PraiseMoves, some of the intergenerational things, and Zach is in GAP. Please welcome them.



The committee arranged for an ad in the Connecticut Choral Society's 2014-2015 booklet similar to the ad last year. Choral Society sent back a note thanking Valley for our hospitality when they have rehearsals at the church.

Ann Thomas, Chair

Building & Grounds Committee

THANK YOU to those who participated in the Fall Clean-up, inside and outside the church. The entry windows sparkle and stains on the carpet are gone. Mother nature's pallet of color has again dropped and been cleared from the planters, parking lots and lawns, and spent flowers have been cut down. The building and grounds are ready for the start of this new year with the Advent Season!



A committee to clean, organize and determine how to use and maintain the lower level space needs to be created. If you would like to be a part of the group to engage in this initiative, pass the word along to Granville Reed or

John Sutor.

B&G Committee

February
NewsLetter
DEADLINE

Saturday, January 24th

Email articles to: valleypresct@gmail.com

FINANCE & STEWARDSHIP

Although the month of November is not closed out, pledge income for the month will be more than double the budget, so we are on track to meet or exceed our budget projections for the year in this line item. This is good news. There were no unusual expenses in November.

The stewardship campaign has started out on a strong note, with more than 20 pledging units showing an increase over the current year. However, there are an additional 20 individuals/families who have not yet submitted a pledge for 2015 even though they have pledged this year. If you are in that 'group' I would encourage you to submit your pledge promptly to help us in our preparation of the budget for next year.

Finance committee will be meeting in early December to prepare the budget which will be presented to session later in the month.

Peace and blessings. Jeff Henriques, Treasurer

A thought to consider----Why not put Valley on your Christmas gift list for this year, and make an extra donation to the church to help us continue to celebrate God's presence among us.

A Note from the Financial Secretary



If you are in need of a "Year-to-Date" summary of your contributions and 2014 pledge fulfillment, please contact the Financial Secretary, Granville Reed (Ph. [203.426.8459](tel:203.426.8459)). Full year-end contribution statements will be issued in January.

PayPal is Coming Soon

If you've been wishing you could make your contributions to Valley electronically, we're almost there! Chris Aher has been working with PayPal to get us on board so that you'll soon have the opportunity if you wish to send your offerings electronically. Stay tuned for more details as they become available.



November 2014

We collected our Great Halloween Candy Tithe for the Brookfield Food Pantry and our UNICEF offering



We welcomed baby Michael into the Valley family



We honored our veterans and sent prayers and blessings with a quilt made by Millie Foster and Helen Martin given to a lucky recipient at the VA Hospital

We hung leaves on our tree for Project Thankful



We spent four weeks praying and imagining how we are being called to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God, culminating in Dedication Sunday.



A Note from Liz from Romania

The 40-day Advent season of fasting has begun in Orthodox Romania. Today is about fish. We were invited to many homes to share their fish, some at the last minute, because they weren't sure they could find what they wanted--a fresh Danube Delta fish good enough for guests.

Whereas we welcome the gifts of Advent--hope, joy, peace, love--here the practice is more penitential and sombre, capped by a 3-day (really ten days with New Year's) religious and festival celebration with a LOT of the foods that were prohibited during the 40 days. Not everyone keeps to the no animal products-dairy, eggs, meat - Advent fast, of course. There are fewer of these items at the grocery stores, though. There seems to be no prohibition about alcohol, so people keep drinking their palinca, suica and other strong and sweet beverages.

In the homes for children, NOROC's grannies are doing special projects for Christmas with children, we introduced decorating Christmas cut-out cookies this year (not part of Romania's traditions), the Bible Study group is practicing the annual program that will go into a number of orphanages and the Senior Center, and (drum roll) the two BIG projects, both of which Valley PC helped with, are:

1) CHRISTMAS COTTAGE in the main town square (where we'll sell stuff we received or made from the Christmas fabric, etc. you sent, and also take photos with Santa) and try to raise funds and awareness; and

2) CHRISTMAS GIFT BAGS - where we give a bag of small toys, games, candy, personal items like deodorant, toothbrush and paste, small towel, etc. for over 400 institutionalized children and 70 seniors at the home.



These are quite complex undertakings.

Dec 1, a national holiday, the CHRISTMAS COTTAGE (Casuta de Craciun) is scheduled to open. Dec 6 is St. Nicholas day, so we'll have special photos with Santa and elves, plus booties to sell stuffed with candy and a small gift.

Please pray that the promises from the city come through and we have our free place on the main square by the Christmas tree. Also please pray that we get the license to sell--not here yet but promised. And . . . pray that we'll figure out how to decorate, staff and stock it in time for opening. Process Process Process !!

We are finding that psychological, physical and spiritual needs of kids in the homes multiply, even as some things may be improving. Abuse of kids by staff and others, bullying, trafficking, corruption, etc. seem to be getting more media attention, and so more vigilance in the social services system that we must keep positive relations with.

Many still go to bed quite hungry, kids out of the system at 18 still end up sleeping under the streets or exploited in bordering countries, and institutionalized kids still are encouraged to quit school in 8th grade because there's no point in dreaming for a better future. Our successes are individual and a result of sustained caring relationships with NOROC volunteers and staff.

Advent is about awaiting a transformation, an incarnation, and a miracle. The work of NOROC (which means "God Bless" in Romanian) is Advent work: incarnational, relational, and often miraculous.



Thank you, Valley Presbyterian, for helping make miracles happen for children who have been taught never to hope. Last week, I asked a high school senior what he hoped to be doing in ten years. He said: "Liz, every time I've pictured something bright happening in the future, it's been painful." I responded: "In that case, let's just look at our feet and image one small step forward at a time."

Leaning forward into Advent hope, taking small steps towards a miraculous future, and looking forward to seeing you all December 28 for PJ's and Carols !!

Keep those prayers rising!
Liz (and Doug)

This week's English Club group at the new Learning Center. Baking and decorating lots of cut-out Christmas Cookies in the wee hours! They want to do it again next week.



**Valley Presbyterian Church
21 West Whisconier Road
Brookfield, CT 06804**

VALLEY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

**21 West Whisconier Road
Brookfield, CT 06804
Telephone: (203) 775-2624**

**Pastor: The Rev. Adele Crawford
Director of Music: Max Vladimiroff
Director of Family Ministries: Megan Christian
Church Office Admin: Terri Flanagan**

**WORSHIP SERVICE
SUNDAY, 10:00 A.M.**

**ADULT STUDY, 9:00 A.M.
and
CHURCH SCHOOL 10:20 AM**



and

