

December 2009

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# Trinity Times

The Newsletter of the Trinity Presbyterian Church – East Brunswick

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## Upcoming Events

- ❖ World AIDS Awareness Day  
December 1, 2009
- ❖ Second Sunday of Advent /  
St. Nicholas Day  
December 6, 2009
- ❖ Pearl Harbor Day  
December 7, 2009
- ❖ Human Rights Day  
December 10, 2009
- ❖ Third Sunday of Advent  
December 13, 2009
- ❖ Bill of Rights Day  
December 15, 2009
- ❖ Fourth Sunday of Advent  
December 20, 2009
- ❖ First Day of Winter  
December 21, 2009
- ❖ Christmas Eve  
December 24, 2009
- ❖ Christmas Day  
December 25, 2009
- ❖ New Year's Eve  
December 31, 2009
- ❖ New Year's Day  
January 1, 2010

## Pastor's Message



The signs are all around: The air is cold; the leaves are all down (well, almost all); the turkey's been eaten. A new season is afoot. It's time to prepare again to prepare again!

I realize how monotonous this surely sounds: to prepare again to prepare again. It might even seem a bit silly, each and every year, to "prepare the way," to "wait" and "watch," as if this time God is finally going to come again. As a result, I think most Christians aren't really sure what to do with Advent – what with all its waiting and watching and preparing. It's uncomfortable – even very uncomfortable.

Thus, we (and I include myself here) tend to join the rest of the world in using Advent as the time to make all the *other* types of preparations – donning the decorations, baking the cookies, buying the gifts. While these *other* preparations can surely make for a festive holiday season (and believe me, my family does them all), to be sure, they can also make for a very stressful season.

And that's the irony in it all. For as the great Christian author Henri Nouwen explains so well, the season of Advent – with all

its waiting and watching and preparing – points us away from all that would normally stress us out or increase our anxieties. For it points us to One whose way is different than we're accustomed to; whose burden is light; whose peace is really, truly on the way, if not already here.

Specifically, Nouwen writes, "(The waiting and watching of Advent point us toward) a growing inner stillness and joy allowing us to realize that he for whom we are waiting has already arrived and speaks to us in the silence of our hearts. Just as a mother feels the child grow in her and is not surprised on the day of the birth but joyfully receives the one she learned to know during her waiting, so Jesus can be born in our lives slowly and steadily and be received as the one we learned to know while waiting." (*The Genessee Diary*, New York: Doubleday, Image Edition, 1989).

Friends, this Advent season, I pray you might find a growing sense of inner stillness and joy as you really take time to wait... to watch... to prepare.

In Peace,  
Rob

## Kathy

In 1865, a young American preacher named Phillips Brooks spent time in and around the fields of Bethlehem. On Christmas Eve, he attended worship in the Church of the Nativity, located on the site where tradition says Jesus was born.

Brooks was so spiritually touched by the experience that he later wrote a hymn for children to sing on Christmas Eve in his Philadelphia church. Lewis Redner, the church organist and Sunday school superintendent, composed the music for the beloved hymn, "O Little Town of Bethlehem."

Today it appears in most denominational hymnals.

Brooks, a giant of a man physically (6-foot-6), was known throughout America as an eloquent and dominant force in the pulpit.

There is a large statue of the gifted man in front of Boston's famous Trinity Church, where Brooks last served. His death in 1893 was a major event in Boston. Upon learning of his passing, a 5-year-old girl exclaimed, "Oh, Mama, how happy the angels will be."

If you have an opportunity on any given Sunday to be in the sanctuary at 9 a.m. while the children and their families enter church, you will be in for quite a surprise! The children run in, excited to be here and excited to see their Sunday school friends.

They are so happy to see their teachers, to hear what they are going to learn about and to participate in all of the various mission activities.

Our church has truly been blessed. We have been blessed with some of the most wonderful adults who teach our children and blessed by wonderful families who know that their child's Christian education is important. They make coming to church a priority, and so together we are growing children who will become disciples, who will be adults who will live their lives for God.

At a recent teachers meeting, we were sharing some of the wonderful expressions of the children and noting that we have such great attendance. In many churches they may have 80 children on their rolls, but only 30 or 40 attend. We average about 80 percent attendance, and it is evidenced in everything our Sunday school does.

Thank you to the congregation for supporting this growing Sunday school! Thank you to the teachers who give so much of themselves each and every week; thank you to

## Happy birthday

*The Trinity Times lists the birthdays of active members each month so you can wish your church family members a happy day.*

*Celebrating December birthdays are:*

4 – Linda Moore,  
Lorraine Webster

5 – Michael Seidler,  
Brian Wolverton

6 – Brendan Coyne,  
Michael Coyne

11 – Alexis Castillo

13 – Steven Jensen,  
Matthew Ondayko,  
Christian Smith

15 – Susan Kaczmarek

16 – Ryan Marosy,  
Jacqueline Watt

17 – Ross Goodfellow,  
Carol Maluchnik

20 – Geraldine Clearie

21 – Christopher  
Abraham

23 – Joseph Fic,  
Douglas Haff, Kevin  
Schuster

25 – Richard Greenlaw

26 – Paul Seidler

28 – Steven Angeline,

## SERVICES ‘PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD’

**Dec. 6** – As December begins, we gather together in celebration of the second Sunday of Advent – the Sunday of Joy. We will hear the cries of John the Baptist in the wilderness, “Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight” as well as Paul’s proclamation to the Philippians (1: 6), “I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.”

It serves to remind us that, despite all the societal hoopla surrounding Christmas, this is a season to reflect on the reality that the world still isn’t as it should be. What can we do help prepare our lives (and our world) for the fulfillment God intends?

On this Advent morn, we also will celebrate the sacrament of our Lord’s Supper, that, together, we may be nourished by Christ’s eternal gifts of love and grace.

**Dec. 13** – On the third Sunday of Advent – the Sunday of Love – we celebrate a very special musical worship service in which we glorify God with the proclamation of Scripture through song. Trinity’s choirs will offer their gifts and songs to God’s glory and lead us as we reflect upon the significance of this season in our lives.

**Dec. 20** – On the fourth Sunday of Advent – the Sunday of Peace



## December Worship Schedule

– we will be blessed to celebrate the annual Sunday School Christmas Pageant in worship.

Combining the work and gifts of Trinity’s Sunday school’s incredible students and leaders, this year’s pageant, written by Lee Ann Smith and directed by Mark Terranova, will truly bring the *sounds* of Christmas to life.

**Dec. 24** – On Christmas Eve, we gather for our special evening services of *Lessons and Carols* at both 7 p.m. and 10 p.m.

These beautiful, candlelit services are filled with Scripture lessons and carols sung and rung telling the story of the Christ child’s birth.

Come and celebrate the joy and beauty as we usher in the season of Christmas together!

**Dec. 27** – The first Sunday after Christmas is a time to intentionally celebrate the light of God’s incarnation in our world!

While our Sunday morning services generally celebrate God’s

*(Continued on Page 4)*

## ***Advent Wreath reminds us what the season is about***

*Do you have any questions regarding our worship at Trinity? Perhaps you've wondered why we do some of the things we do (or don't do some of the things you may have seen done elsewhere). In this recurring Trinity Times article, the Rev. Carter tackles a question some may be asking about our Sunday morning worship services.*

*This month, Pastor Rob explores:*

### ***What exactly is the symbolism behind the Advent Wreath?***

To be sure, the Advent wreath is both a beautiful and powerful reminder of what exactly the season of Advent is about, as well as that to which its lights would point us.

For example, it's important to note that the Advent wreath is circular – without beginning or end – just as God's love for us has no beginning or end. One may also note that Advent wreaths are usually made of evergreens, which never wither or fade away, just as God's faithfulness to and presence with us never wither or fade away.

The four outer Advent candles around the wreath symbolize the coming of Christ, who came to bring the light of God's *hope, joy, love, and peace* into the world.

Each week of Advent, in succession, a different candle of this wreath is lit during worship to help us build our anticipation and



appreciation for the gifts and meaning of God's incarnation! Lastly, on Christmas Eve, in addition to lighting the four outer "Advent" candles, we also light the center, white candle, which stands for Jesus Christ himself.

The lighting of this candle is rich with so many biblical references, all of which lead us to see, in this tiny baby born in such a lowly way, God's eternal light of life and truth and grace; it is the very light with which this baby will grow up to one day reign over us and all the world.

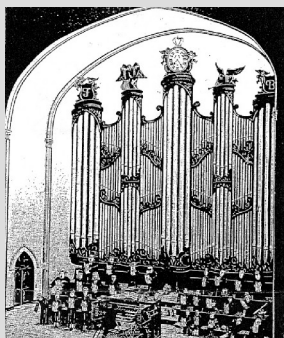
*Do you have a question about how we worship at Trinity? If so, and you'd like to have it considered for inclusion in this column, please call Pat Staffa at the church office (732-257-6636).*

## ***Christmas Love Feast to be held on last Sunday in December***

(Continued from Page 3)

presence through our traditional order of worship, on this special Sunday we will celebrate an *alternative Christmas worship service*. Intended to open our hearts and eyes to the love and joy of Christ now in the world, this special service – filled with a carol-sing, hot cocoa, and *more* (with special thanks to the deacons who make it all possible) – is adapted from an old Protestant Christmas tradition known as the *Love Feast*.

Young and old alike should come and celebrate this different but meaningful way to worship the Lord!



NOTES FROM THE LOFT

On Nov. 8, the choirs of Trinity and Sacred heart took part in the American Guild of Organists Choral Festival.

Almost 200 people attended. It was a first for the Middlesex County AGO, and by the positive response from singers and audience alike, it won't be the last.

At the conclusion of the program more than 100 singers from seven choirs sang the Hallelujah Chorus and Lukin Benediction.

Speaking of concerts, all are welcome to attend the Sacred Heart Church Advent/Christmas Concert on Dec. 5 at 7:30 p.m. Both Trinity and Sacred Heart choirs will again join forces for this program of sacred music.

On Dec. 13 we will again be together as we bring the Christmas message in song at the 10:15 a.m. worship time at Trinity.

#### December Highlights

Dec. 6 (Advent II) — Could this be the Day, J. Martin.

Dec. 13 (Advent III) — The Christmas Message In Song.

Dec. 20 (Advent IV) — Children's Program.

Dec. 24 (Christmas Eve) — Soloists at 7 p.m. service; Trinity Bells; Chancel Choir at 11 p.m. service.

## CHILDREN'S SERMONS TO FOCUS ON ANGELS

*(Continued from Page 2)*

your gift-giving list in lieu of a gift.

You can make a donation to Heifer in honor of your children's teachers or coaches — they make great stocking stuffers and gifts for the folks for whom you have no idea what to get. Making a donation in their honor will help them feel as though they are a part of something bigger and that you thought enough of them to include them in this powerful ministry.

No donation is too small!  
Consider making one today!

### The Christmas angels

This year during the Advent season our children's sermons will focus on the angels in the Christmas story. We will hear about the angel that visited Mary, the angel that visited Joseph, and the multitude of angels that visited the shepherds.

### Youth Crusade, annual party slated for December

Trinity's youth will participate in Calvary Chapel's Youth Crusade on Dec. 6. The band Whosoever will perform.

Among the members of Whosoever is Sonny Sandoval of P.O.D. The band will present a Christian concert as well as

testimony of how God has changed the members' lives. All interested youth will meet at the church at 4 p.m. for pizza, and we will head out at 4:45 p.m. This event is free, and we hope you will all join us!

The youths' annual Christmas party will be held Dec. 13 from 6 to 8 p.m. Everyone who plans to attend should bring a \$10 grab bag gift. There will be fun, games, food and celebration! See you then!

No youth group meetings will be held Dec. 20 and 27 and Jan. 3. The youth group will reconvene on Jan. 10 with bowling in the New Year.

Each week the children will receive a different angel ornament to make at home with their families that they can add to their tree.

Your whole family will want to be sure to join us for all of the Advent celebrations at Trinity this year!

### Thanks to our youth

We would like to thank our Junior High Sunday School class for the beautiful gift of our Advent devotional.

Under the direction of LeeAnn Smith, Paula Riepl and Frank Genus, the youth worked together on various scripture passages and put together a devotional that we can each read during this Advent season.

Be sure to pick one up in the narthex and thank our youth for this wonderful gift!



**Youth Crusade**

### *Bible lessons and carols*

The traditional Christmas Eve service using Bible lessons and Christmas carols was first held in England in 1918 at Cambridge University's King's College.

Eric Milner-White, a 34-year-old who had just been appointed dean of King's, planned the service. His previous experience as an army chaplain convinced him that the Church of England needed to make worship more expressive.

The service has been broadcast from King's annually since 1928, missing only one year (1930). Radio listeners could tune in and hear the service during World War II, although the name of King's couldn't be broadcast due to security precautions. During the war, the chapel's antique glass – and thus all its heat – had been removed.

Every year, millions of people worldwide listen to the "Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols." Since 1919, the service has begun with the hymn "Once in Royal David's City."

#### PRESBYTERIAN

When you rearrange the letters, you get:

**BEST IN PRAYER**

## Children to raise funds for Heifer

This year our children have set a goal to collect \$5,000 to purchase an ark full of animals for Heifer International.

In addition to raising the money, the children will be learning much, much more. The first thing we hope they will learn is that they are disciples of Jesus.

All too often we confine children to collecting money for something they don't really understand. Heifer is something very tangible that they can understand and they can work with.

Children need hands on tactile experiences in order to make meaning and develop understanding.

With Heifer the children will learn about various animals and the many different ways these animals can improve the quality of someone's life.

In addition, they will learn to love their neighbor as themselves. We will emphasize that our neighbor is more than the person who lives next door. Our neighbors are all of God's people, regardless of whether we know them or not. Our children will be reaching out to families within the United States and abroad through this project.

Finally, they also will be learning valuable ways to care for creation and how, through caring and sustaining our earth, we also care for each other in the present and in the future.

A large part of Heifer's efforts include caring for the earth and teaching people in villages farming techniques that will care for the environment as well as increase their crops.

All of the work that we are doing with the children and youth throughout the year will also contribute to the Christian Education requirements for our GreenFaith certification toward which our church is working.

We have asked each class to sponsor one event or project to help us reach our goal, and we were surprised and thrilled with their energy and enthusiasm. As a congregation, we can look forward in the upcoming months to a lemonade stand, a movie night, a flea market and many other fun and exciting ideas.

The children are so excited that they want to invite their friends to take part in these events as well. This also means they are evangelizing! They are telling their friends about what they are doing at church and how they are serving God through doing it!

The direct benefit is helping people in poverty and hunger around the globe.

The long-term benefits are immeasurable.

We hope that you and your family will support our Heifer program throughout this year as much as you can.

**Christian Teachings on the Environment**  
**Rev. Fletcher Harper**  
**Executive Director, GreenFaith**

**God created the universe, and is its ultimate Owner.**

*In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light.*

*Genesis 1:1-3*

*The earth is the LORD's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it; for he has founded it on the seas, and established it on the rivers.*

*Psalms 24:1-2*

*Then David blessed the LORD in the presence of all the assembly; David said: 'Blessed are you, O LORD, the God of our ancestor Israel, for ever and ever ... for all that is in the heavens and on the earth is yours. For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you. For we are aliens and transients before you, as were all our ancestors; our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no hope. O LORD our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a house for your holy name comes from your hand and is all your own.'*

*1 Chronicles 29:10-16*

*"I'd grown up in the Baptist Church in South Central Los Angeles – in the heart of the city - and I'd sung the hymn 'How Great Thou Art' a thousand times. But the first time I really understood what that hymn meant was when I went on a Boy Scout camping trip. We climbed Mt. Whitney – it was a huge mountain, and I'd never climbed or seen anything so huge. I thought we were never going to get to the top – it was a struggle – and when we did, I looked out over miles and miles of mountains and plains beyond. It was stunning. Right then, at that moment, I knew for the first time what the words of that hymn meant – 'My God, how great Thou art.'"*

*Pastor Darrel Armstrong, Shiloh Baptist Church, Trenton NJ*

It's so simple a teaching, so monumental, and so easy to overlook. From the very beginning of the Bible, Christianity teaches that God is the Creator of the universe and everything in it. This is the first Christian teaching about Creation, and it is the foundation on which every other Christian environmental teaching stands. God made the earth. Period – and beginning of story.

This is a teaching whose meaning we realize only if we go beyond the mere words themselves, and pause to feel their impact. Read Pastor Armstrong's story above, and you begin to get a sense of what it means, what it means to say that God is the Creator. Step outside and look around you from horizon to horizon – and gain a sense of the scope of Creation. Look at a simple tree – its elegance, the curve of its limbs, the texture of its bark and leaves, the reach of its roots. At night, look up at the stars – if you can see them – and realize that the light you're seeing has been traveling through space at unimaginable speed for decades, from a far corner of our galaxy. Watch a bird in flight. Look at a green plant growing through the cracks of a city street. Listen to the rush of the wind. Look at a human hand. If we pause to look, the force of this teaching hits us. Because of Creation's size and scope and stunning beauty, it is a remarkable thing to acknowledge that God is its Creator.

Christianity, however, doesn't stop at stating that God simply made the universe – it also teaches that God owns the universe, that God still claims it as God's own. The passage from Psalm 24 captures this nicely by asserting that God owns the earth and that God created it. The passage from 1 Chronicles further amplifies this theme. King David has called for the collection of the building materials for the Temple and the response has been overwhelming. The people of Israel have given more than generously. David stands in front of an enormous offering of silver and gold, bronze and iron, and semi-precious stones. And when the people see the fruits of their generosity, they are thrilled – the passage reads, "Then the people rejoiced because these had given willingly, for with single mind they had offered freely to the LORD; King David also rejoiced greatly." (1 Chron. 29:9)

Then, David prays, and his prayer is simple and direct. He states, twice, that the people of Israel have given back to God that which God already owns. The King James Version of the Bible translates one of these verses beautifully: "All things come of Thee, O Lord, and of Thine own have we given Thee." It's a remarkable statement on a remarkable occasion. Imagine what it's like to see the wealthiest, most powerful leaders of a nation, gathered in the presence of almost unimaginable wealth – and to have the most powerful man among them state clearly that all their wealth is, ultimately, not their own. This combination of power and humility, pride and faith, is of Biblical proportions. Again, it's a story, a teaching that needs to be felt in order to be understood.

In sum, Christianity teaches us that God is the Creator and Owner of the universe – a simple set of teachings with a powerful reach.

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## Roasted Asparagus

Asparagus starts appearing in grocery stores in the early spring. Roasted, it is crisp, sweet, and wonderful.

**Prep Time: 10 minutes**

**Cook Time: 8 minutes**

**Ingredients:**

1 lb. Asparagus

Tbsp. olive oil

1/2 tsp. Salt

**Preparation:**

Clean asparagus, and take each stalk in your hands. Bend the stalk, and the asparagus will naturally snap at the point where it becomes tough. Place the tips on a heavy baking pan and toss with the olive oil. Roast at 425 degrees F for 5-10 minutes, until asparagus is tender and begins to brown. It can also be roasted at 400 degrees F for 8-12 minutes, or 375 degrees F. for 12-16 minutes. Serves 4

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“There is no peace more wonderful than the peace we enjoy when faith shows us God in all created things.”

— **Jean-Pierre de Caussde** (1675-1751), *Jesuit Priest and Spiritual Director*

**Trinity's Earth Shepherds**  
are happy to share Trinity's new  
**Environmental Mission Statement**



**'We, as a family of faith, believe that it is the responsibility of all  
to Care for God's Creation  
through environmental education, conservation  
and community outreach''**

The mission statement was written to reflect the congregation's responses  
to the Green Team/TES survey done on Kick-Off Sunday.

If you would like to have a look at the survey results,  
you can find them posted on the Mission Board in Kern Hall.  
We will also be posting them on the GreenFaith Certification page  
of the Trinity website [www.trinity-pc.org](http://www.trinity-pc.org) in the near future.

Please note:

This mission statement does not take the place of the church's mission statement!  
This is stating the mission of the church in regard  
to our ever-growing commitment to care for God's creation.

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