

The Linden Letter

December 2011/January 2012

My Linden Heights family,

I hope that you have enjoyed watching all of our new acolytes as they have helped us prepare for worship by bringing the light of Christ into God's sanctuary. We are so proud of each and every one of them and we want to say a big THANK YOU to Paul Kelley for training and shadowing our servers on Sunday mornings as they learn their many duties!

The word acolyte is taken from an ancient Greek word that meant *companion, attendant or helper*. The earliest record of acolytes tells us that in A.D. 251 there were forty-two of them helping in churches in the city of Rome. So, for nearly 2000 years, acolytes have **STRETCHED THEIR ARMS AND STOOD ON TIPTOE** to offer us a sign and symbol of Jesus, the light of the world. Perhaps we could learn a powerful lesson from the youngest among us as we travel through Advent and Christmastide. As we watch them light the altar candles, we might ask ourselves, **HOW FAR ARE WE WILLING TO STRETCH** to bring the light of Christ to others? Are we willing to **STAND ON TIPTOE** to see those who, like Jesus, came into this world under less-than-ideal circumstances? Are we willing to look for the light of Jesus in the eyes of the last and least among us?

The story of Christmas reminds us that God came to us in a most unlikely place, a lowly stable in Bethlehem; through the most unlikely of people, a teenager named Mary; under the most unlikely circumstances, the poverty of the Judean hills. Today, God in Christ reaches out to others through the most unlikely people -- you and me.

So, I invite you to travel to Bethlehem not just to hear the ancient story but to become an acolyte. Be a companion to someone who needs a listening ear, attend to those who are crying out in the wildernesses of our world, help someone who has fallen on difficult times. Nobody gets to the great goals of life by standing on their own feet and reaching with their own arms. There are times in each of our lives when we will need an outstretched hand. If God can work through the lives of fragile folk like Mary and Joseph and through the outstretched arms and tipped-up-toes of our newest worship leaders, surely God can work through each one of us as we share the light of Christmas joy, peace and love with others.

In God's peace,

Pastor Karen

December/January Highlights

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| Friday, December 2 To Saturday, December 3 | 6:00 PM 6:00 PM | Prayer Vigil |
| Saturday, December 3 | 5:00 - 7:00 PM | Youth Group Spaghetti Dinner |
| Saturday, December 10 | 6:00 - 8:00 PM | Living Nativity |
| Saturday, December 17 | 9:00 AM | Sunday school rehearsal for "The Paper Bag Christmas" |
| Sunday, December 18 | One Service - 10:00 AM 11:00 AM | Sunday school and congregation presentation of "The Paper bag Christmas" Coffee Hour |
| Sunday, January 1 | One service - 10:00 AM | No Sunday school |
| January 20 - 22 | | Youth Group at ROCK |



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| 4:00 PM | A Family Christmas |
| 6:30 PM | Candlelight Christmas Eve Service |
| 9:00 PM | Candlelight Christmas Eve Service |
| Sunday, December 25 - One Combined Service At 10:00 AM, No Sunday School | |

Christmas Reminders

You can use our Christmas Card box, located on the narthex table to send cards to members of our congregation. The box will be out until December 11. Sorted cards will be available for pick-up on December 18.

Or, use the "Alternative Christmas Cards" to send holiday greetings. Save time, money and still send good wishes to your church family. Christmas greetings with names listed will be placed as an insert in the Christmas Eve bulletins. The cost is \$5.00. Please make checks payable to Linden Heights UMC.



Drive Through Live Nativity Scene

Please mark your calendar for Saturday, December 10, from 6:00 - 8:00 PM for our live nativity scene. Tell your friends and neighbors to come and enjoy our celebration of Christ's birth. We are having live characters, music, animals and will be serving hot chocolate and snacks.



Linden Heights United Methodist Church is having a Prayer Vigil from Friday, December 2 beginning at 6:00 PM and ending on Saturday, December 3 at 6:00 PM. There is a sign up sheet in the breezeway if you would like to participate. Our goal is to have someone in the church every hour.

ROCK RETREAT

The Youth Group will be attending the Baltimore-Washington Conference Youth retreat in Ocean City the weekend of January 20-22, 2012. There will be inspirational speakers, musical ministry and spiritual growth. Rich Sheats will be leading the Youth Group. Please keep these youth in your prayers as they grow in spirit.



"The Paper Bag Christmas"

Our Sunday school program "The Paper Bag Christmas" will be held on Sunday, December 18th at the combined 10 AM worship service. (There will be no Sunday school that day.) This "spontaneous" program will involve the entire congregation and all of the Sunday school children/youth

will be a part of the program. If your child receives a part as a leader or reader he/she must attend a rehearsal on Saturday, December 17 at 9 AM. There will be a fellowship time after the service where children will receive a gift from their Sunday school teachers. There are always extra gift bags should children who want to participate show up on the 17th. This should be a meaningful and fun day for our church family.

The "Paper Bag Christmas" will involve the adults as well as the children. As you enter the church the day of the program, you will be asked to decide what "part" you would like to play in the program. The Sunday School children will have bags with costumes, (mostly headpieces), for you to choose from. During the service as our readers tell the Christmas story you will follow the youth leader for the part you have chosen, directions will be in the bulletin to help you. This program also includes many favorite Christmas carols for you to enjoy. If you would just like to enjoy the program without taking part, that is fine also. Following the service there will be a coffee hour in the fellowship hall. We would appreciate donations of finger food for all to share. We look forward to a joy filled and blessed morning with our church family.

If you have any questions, please contact Ruth Snyder, 410-592-8417.



Youth Group spaghetti dinner!!!

December 3, 5:00 - 7:00 PM. The menu is spaghetti and meatballs, salad, bread, dessert table, drinks. The cost is adults \$8.00, youth \$4.00, children under 5 free. A maximum of \$25.00 for a family of 4 or more. Tickets are on sale now.



Finances for October:

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|---------------------|----------------|
| Operating Expenses: | |
| Income | \$14,164.20 |
| Expenses | <u>9216.49</u> |
| Net | 4947.71 |
| Improvement Fund | |
| Income | \$1069.00 |

Preschool News

December certainly came upon us quickly. We have a Christmas tree in the preschool that we are decorating with socks and mittens. They will be donated to Henderson Settlement. We are also collecting food to add to the church's food drive. The preschoolers are making presents for their parents and projects to help decorate their homes. The children are going to be surprised when Santa visits this month.

A big Thank You to everyone who participated in the preschool's fall fundraiser. To those church members who purchased Moore's candy, we truly appreciate it. All profit will be put right back into the preschool program. Again, thank you and Merry Christmas.



Missions Christmas Project

For Christmas this year, the Missions Committee will be partnered with the Franciscan Center of Baltimore. Currently the Center is extremely short on winter clothing and other items for young children. Listed below are the items we will be collecting:

- Clothing for children size infant to size 4, boys or girls
- Mittens & hats
- Diapers and formula

- Toys - in the infant to age 4 range

We are requesting that toys be wrapped but the clothing and other items do not need to be wrapped. All items need to be to the church by December 17. Thank you for your generosity.

-Missions Committee

In Need Of a Card

Remember our "homeless cab driver", Cindy? Well, Cindy was in a serious car accident last spring and is still recovering. If you would like to get in touch with her, here's her address & phone number:

Cindy Kapinos
5600 Knell Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21206
410-522-8112

I'm sure she would appreciate a note.

Church Office Hours

During the week of December 19, the office will be open on Monday, December 19 and Tuesday, December 20 from 9:00 AM - 3:00. On Wednesday, December 21, the hours are 9:00 - 1:00. The office will be closed from December 22 to January 3.

Please leave any urgent messages on the answering machine. Pastor Karen will check the machine. Merry Christmas!



To Our Church Family,

A Christmas Wish

That Christ's great love,

His grace and goodness, too,

May fill your heart

Bless you now,

And all the whole year through!

The Staff of Linden Heights United Methodist Church

Pastor

Hand Bell Director

Administrative Assistant

Nursery Attendant

Youth Coordinator

Karen Davis

Deidre Duda

Deb Singer

Stacey Poe

Rich Sheats