

MIDWEEK MESSAGE

December 18, 2013

Words to Consider:

*When the Holy Child is born into our hearts
there is a rain of stars
a rushing of angels
a blaze of candles
this God burst into our lives.
Love is running through the streets."*

Ann Weems, "Godburst," *Kneeling in Bethlehem*

THE WORK OF THE CHURCH



- ❖ **MEN'S BREAKFAST, 8:00 AM, Wednesday, December 18**, at Hobe's Restaurant, 4224 El Camino Real, Palo Alto. All the men from our Church family are welcome.
- ❖ **CHURCH CHOIR Thursday, December 19 at 7:30 PM** in the Parlor. All are welcome to join in song (and fun).
- ❖ **SATURDAY, DECEMBER 21, 10:00 AM**, please come help **set up for Sunday's Christmas Brunch**. Many hands make light work!
- ❖ Dan Cudworth and Pastor Rick encourage you to attend one of the **WINTER'S GIFTS" JOY! Concerts of the Choral Project with the San Jose Chamber Orchestra**. **Saturday, December 21, First Presbyterian, Palo Alto (1170 Cowper) at 8:00 PM or Sunday December 22, Mission Santa Clara, 7:00 PM**. Several members of The Choral Project will be singing with our church choir on Sunday morning. For more information go to sjcp.org or (408) 295-4416.
- ❖ **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 22, 10:00 AM Worship for the whole family:** *"Let Us Build a House where All Are Named, their Songs and Visions Heard"* Pastor Rick preaching, *"Love Is on the Way."* **11:30 AM Christmas Brunch** (bring finger food to share) and **Pageant** – *"The Adventures of the Grinch, Nope, Dan Who Misplaced and Generally Neglected our Savior and Messiah, Christ Jesus (Amen): Episode 1"* – the premier screening of a brand new video, featuring – us all!

- ❖ **BIBLE STUDY** will be on hiatus until **Tuesday, January 7.**
- ❖ **NO WOMEN'S BRUNCH** this month. We will resume on Thursday, January 23.
- ❖ **CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE, Tuesday, December 24, 5:30 PM** A brief service of candles and carols for the whole family.



- ❖ **MERRY CHRISTMAS TO US ALL.** Church offices will be closed December 25 through January 2.

UPCOMING AND ONGOING EVENTS

Retired Ministers & Missionaries Offering



Thank You For...

goal of \$750.

The **SPECIAL MISSION OFFERING FOR DECEMBER** is our annual **thank you offering for retired ministers and missionaries.** This year's theme is "Thank You for..." all the myriad ways in which these folk have served Christ's church in every corner of the globe. We give in gratitude for the years of sacrificial service that many of these leaders have provided, often at very low levels of income. It is a way of saying "thank you" for the blessings they have brought to the church and our lives. We have received **\$521** toward our

FROM THE STEWARDSHIP TASK TEAM

A gentle and friendly reminder to those who have not yet turned in their pledge forms for 2014, please carefully and prayerfully consider your commitment to support financially the life of our congregation. Then fill out your form and turn it in as soon as possible. This is an enormous help to the budgeting process and a way of affirming your belief that God has good work to do through us. Thanks to everyone who has submitted a pledge. We are about 3/4s the projected amount for 2014 pledges.

IN THE WORLD

BAPTISTS CELEBRATE JUDSONS IN BURMA, *Bob Allen (Associated Baptist Press), 12-5-2013*

Baptists from the United States and around the world traveled this week to Myanmar to celebrate the 200-year anniversary of the arrival of an American Baptist missionary credited with bringing Christianity to the country in Southeast Asia formerly known as Burma.

An estimated 30,000 people were on hand at the start of a four-day celebration of the arrival of Adoniram Judson, one of the first missionaries to be commissioned in the United States and whose work gave birth to a mission society today known as International Ministries of American Baptist Churches USA.

Adoniram Judson and his wife of seven days, Ann Hasseltine Judson, set sail for India Feb. 19, 1812, as Congregationalist missionaries. While doing translation work during the four-month voyage, Judson became convinced immersion was the mode of baptism in the Bible and decided to become a Baptist.

Denied entry into India, the couple arrived in Burma on July 13, 1813. Luther Rice, another American missionary who also converted to the Baptist faith, returned to the U.S. to raise funds for the General Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States for Foreign Missions, popularly known as the Triennial Convention, formed in 1814.

The organization, today American Baptist Churches USA, served as the agency for the support of foreign missionaries of American Baptists both North and South until the organization of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1845.

A linguist by training, Judson began early on translating the Bible into Burmese, a task completed in 1834. He also compiled the first Burmese grammar book and the first English-Burmese dictionary. His legacy today includes 1.6 million Baptists in more than 4,700 churches in a country that is an estimated 90 percent Buddhist and 4 percent Christian.

The *Irrawaddy*, a news-and-analysis website that covers Burma and the Southeast Asian region, described the Dec. 2-5 celebration in Rangoon as the first mass gathering of Baptists in Burma, where meetings of more than five people were forbidden during decades of military rule. More than 25,000 people registered for the commemoration, and planners estimated attendance could reach as high as 40,000.



The U.S. State Department restored diplomatic relations with Myanmar after reforms, including the 2012 election of pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, a one-time political prisoner, to a seat in the Burmese parliament.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, an independent group that advises the State Department, however, still considers Burma a "country of particular concern," a designation for the world's worst violators of religious freedom that the State Department last used in 2011. The *Kachin News Group*, based in Chiang Mai, Thailand, reported that a group of Kachin Baptists traveling by train to the Judson celebration were pelted with stones at a station in central Burma. Hundreds of Baptists from the U.S. traveled in groups, including American Baptist Churches USA, American Baptist Women, Central Baptist Theological Seminary, the Baptist World Alliance and International Ministries.

Evelyn Hanneman, operations coordinator for the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America, said she jumped at an invitation from a colleague at the Myanmar Institute of Theology to attend. "I knew I wanted to be there," Hanneman said in a blog report dated Nov. 27. "I learned about Ann and Adoniram Judson as a child in Sunday school and am thrilled that I will be able to visit those 'Golden Shores' and join the Baptists there to celebrate the ministry of the Judsons."

The celebration came on the heels of the Nov. 27-Dec. 1 centennial celebration of the Karen Baptist Convention, the largest member body of the Myanmar Baptist Convention, the national organization of Baptist churches in 18 language and regional conventions.

JOYS AND CONCERNS

Joys:

- ✚ Belated birthday joys for Paul Tuan (December 15)
- ✚ Lois Ville for successful surgery for her brother, Lew, and friend, Barbara
- ✚ For the excellent concert from the iSing girls on Friday night and for the leadership of Jennifer Delp-Somers and Shane Troll
- ✚ For Naomi's worship leadership and for the contribution of her mentor, Keith Gilbert from KY
- ✚ For a fun caroling party with delicious chili prepared by Sachiko Berry and crew

Concerns – New:

- ✚ For Oleta as she recovers from a cold and high blood pressure in anticipation of her surgery scheduled for Friday
- ✚ For Don Granholm who is now in hospice care at Grant Cuesta in Mountain View; for Mary, Steve and Dean as they care for him
- ✚ For Virginia Herbert who is ill
- ✚ For Daniel Ha who is recovering from a broken ankle (suffered in Karate practice)
- ✚ Kathy Gillam for a young colleague recently diagnosed with breast cancer
- ✚ Lynn Hunwick for those victimized by Typhoon Haiyan
- ✚ For Richard and the family and friends as they grieve the death of Patrice
- ✚ Pastor Rick for Charlotte Jackson, whose younger brother died on Sunday morning; for Pastor Bruce Chittick of Burton Community Church who is recovering at home with heart problems; for Marcia Patton recovering at home from hip surgery

- ✚ Thelma Parodi for her daughter, Lee, who will have back surgery January 8; for traveling mercies for her granddaughter
- ✚ For the lives in service of all our retired ministers and missionaries in the ABC-USA

Ongoing:

- ✚ For Bob Towner at Manor Care in Sunnyvale and for Lucille
- ✚ Laura Garcia for Janice with health concerns
- ✚ For Ruth Clark, Earl and Virginia Knechtel, Carl Schilling
- ✚ For Ruriko Uda's congregation, Izumi Parktown Church, in Sendai , Japan
- ✚ For Ramesh Kumar and the ministry of Balasore Technical School in India
- ✚ For our sister church in Corinto, Nicaragua
- ✚ For refugees and all victims of war and disaster everywhere
- ✚ For the work of EHP and the Opportunity Center with the homeless and hungry
- ✚ For the well-being of our church: wisdom and guidance for our leaders and its future
- ✚ For the economies of which we are a part (global, national, state, local)
- ✚ For the care of the earth
- ✚ For the peoples of the world striving for freedom and dignity
- ✚ For peace in a war-torn world, food for the hungry, homes for the homeless, justice for the abused and oppressed, and hope for the future
- ✚ For those affected by indiscriminate acts of violence and for the adoption of measures to heal our communities of all the many ways these make us less safe and less free

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2013

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Let Us Build a House where All Are Named, their Songs and Visions Heard

"Love Is on the Way"

Pastor Rick Preaching

Lectionary reading for the Week: Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19; **ISAIAH 7:10-16**; **MATTHEW 1:18-25**; Romans 1:1-7. (Focus scripture for this week is in bold.)

Isaiah questions the king's sincerity. Who does King Ahaz mean when he speaks of "the Lord?" Isaiah claims a different deity: "Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also?" My God and your God may not be the same. Perhaps the king had become like those of us who live in these latter days who have given up looking for any signs beyond those we can make ourselves. We're in charge. Perhaps we're afraid that if God gave us a sign, it would not be what we wanted. Better not to ask at all. Right, King Ahaz?

Wrong, says God. I myself will give you a sign even if you don't ask for one. A child. Immanuel. O my people, are you still waiting for the Warrior God -- and now you are terrified that the gods of Syria are greater than I am? Must I be like you, only bigger? Must I be vengeful in a world obsessed with getting even? I myself will give you a sign: "a young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall call him Immanuel"...These words were not written for those who live on this side of the New Testament.

Yet, it was not wrong for Matthew to hear Isaiah's prophecy pointing to Jesus as "Immanuel, that is God-with-us." Matthew found Jesus in Isaiah, even though Jesus' name isn't in the text. The stories of God's movement in history invite each generation to enter the story. African slaves in America heard stories of God delivering the Hebrew people from bondage in Egypt. They heard themselves in that story in a way their slave masters did not. The exodus became an African American story and Miriam's song became a freedom song of deliverance from the auction block. Every generation enters the pages of scripture with longing and need, expectation and hope. This is why we call the Bible a living word. (Barbara Lundblad, "Commentary on Isaiah 7:10-16," December 22, 2013, workingpreacher.org).

Prayer: Shepherd of Israel, may Jesus, Emmanuel and son of Mary, be more than just a dream in our hearts. With the apostles, prophets, and saints, save us, restore us, and lead us in the way of grace and peace, that we may bear your promise into the world. Amen.

A NOTE FROM PASTOR RICK

Thanks to everyone who participated in our annual caroling event and chili supper Sunday. Thirteen of us caroled for members of our community who don't get around so easily anymore. Then we returned to the church for a delicious supper supervised by Sachiko Berry with her talented team of Eleanor Satterlee, Joanne Jones, Marilyn Hunwick and choppers extraordinaire, Paul Berry and Hugh Satterlee. The weekend began with a wonderful introductory concert from the iSing Girl Choir led by Jennah Delp-Somers and Shane Troll and included a lovely worship service planned and conducted by our intern, Naomi. (This in spite of her "Friday the thirteenth!" If you have a few minutes, ask her about it.) Thanks to Thelma (and Ron) Tuttle for overseeing and delivering our EHP Adopt-a Family project, as well as to everyone who participated. Four families totaling 17 people will have a brighter Christmas because of our generosity.

This Sunday we will conclude our Advent season, the time of preparation for Christmas. The theme is "Let Us Build a House where All Are Named, their Songs and Visions Heard" and

my sermon is titled "Love Is on the Way." As we've been reminded in our Advent Adult Spiritual Formation time – "This world is wild as an old wives' tale and strange the plain things are " (G. K. Chesterton, "The House of Christmas"). So we here the promise of a baby born to a young woman – an ordinary occurrence – only this baby will be God living among us! Indeed plain things become strange in this season and we wait and watch in wonder. The service will hold an abundance of music; our choir will be augmented by several singers from The Choral Project as well as friends and family. It promises to be a good day.

Following the service we will hold our annual Christmas Brunch in the Fellowship Hall (bring finger food to share,) featuring the world premier of "*The Adventures of the Grinch, Nope, Dan Who Misplaced and Generally Neglected our Savior and Messiah, Christ Jesus (Amen): Episode 1,*" a video Christmas Pageant created by our children and youth. It will be another full and fabulous day to share with a family member, friend, neighbor, colleague or stranger or two. See you Sunday at 10 AM.

May God's new thing flourish within us and among us.

Pastor Rick

PS Don't forget Christmas Eve worship at 5:30 PM on Christmas Eve. This will be a lovely candlelit service for the whole family.



FROM PASTOR TRIPP

It's not too late. If you are online at all, we're also going to try a little photographic meditation. Take a photo and post it on the church Facebook page and any other favorite social media platform with the hashtag #rethinkchurch or #redpoinsettias and we'll be sure to feature them in the Midweek Message and the church bulletin. You'll see here that each day of December has a theme! It has the potential to be fun and beautiful.



STEADFAST

Advent photo-a-day [Dec. 1-25]

1 go	12 hope	23 neighbors
2 bound	13 justice	24 joy
3 peace	14 gather	25 light
4 time	15 rejoice	
5 flood	16 strong	
6 awake	17 free	
7 ready	18 mercy	
8 wisdom	19 patient/patience	
9 delight	20 good news	
10 holy	21 prophet	
11 steadfast/steady	22 sign	

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HOPE



HOPE



JUSTICE



REJOICE



STRONG



// For to be **free** is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.

Nelson Mandela

FREE