

HEIRLOOM

of the Union Church of Bay Ridge
Ridge Boulevard and 80th Street

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The Parish House/Office

(718) 745-0438

8101 Ridge Boulevard

Brooklyn, New York 11209

February/March, 2009

Rev. Mary Barrett Speers, *Pastor*

Vince Peterson, *Minister of Music*

Ed Huml, *BRUCA Director* Jody Levine, *Administrator*



MESSAGE FROM OUR 2009 PASTOR'S REPORT

Greetings in the Spirit this new year!

Sunday, February 1 is our annual congregational meeting, when we elect a new class of elders, approve the pastor's terms of call, and hear reports from 2008 and the budget Session has approved for 2009. This letter is also my report for 2008. I can't list everything here, of course, but here are some of the highlights.

This is the year we got a website we can keep fresh and up to date, and your pastor is the webmistress. This has been fun for me and a learning experience as well. I also went to General Assembly this year, for the first time as an observer. Many thanks to all of you who were so encouraging and supportive.

We hosted the September meeting of New York Presbytery, in celebration of women's ordination in general and the 50th anniversary of the ordination of Peggy Howland, associate pastor with George Bonnell, in particular. Peggy came to take part in the service, and has written me to thank us for a lovely day and the worship service that, in her words, "helped me to see how special and important what I did 50 years ago was."

And, in hopeful response to our General Assembly's vote to delete exclusive language from the Book of Order, Session led Union Church to become the 20th member of Presbyterian Welcome, the association of churches in New York City and Hudson River Presbyteries that do not discriminate on the basis of sexual identity. We have had such a policy statement in place for years, and of course we are already living it out, so this was the next logical step, to be celebrated a month from now on the first Sunday of Lent. I truly believe all our pastors right back to John Paul Jones would be proud of us. I know that Jo Tolley and Peggy Howland are.

Despite the financial worries of 2008, the Union Church Playgroup has been busy and successful—and a welcome source of revenue in our struggling economy. Please thank Jody for her wonderful work the next time you speak to her. Kristin Miller's yoga classes on Mondays as well as Wednesdays in our Parish House playgroup space are running all year round at close to capacity for adults. Michele DiBartolo, our new clerk of session, also did an excellent job unofficially chairing our Administrative Committee, shepherding us through major repairs to the Sanctuary (roof and electricity), together with Victor Morales and Marek Kurek, our Property Caretaker.

Wednesday Bible Study with Redeemer-St John's and several other Lutheran churches continues to thrive,

and this year we began a cooperative Bible study every other Tuesday evening with Salem Lutheran Church; the group meets in my study. Reflective Saturdays have evolved into half-day mini-retreats held less frequently. Thanks to this renewed interest in the inward journey, and also in large part to our ecumenical outward-journey good times with the Marathon of Prayer and Praise (year 4!), our Lenten program, "Peace Is..." (on Thursdays this year) has evolved—please see the schedule in your newsletter and in the bulletin announcements.

This has been an exciting year, but a sobering one. Session has had to look long and hard at our budget, and for the first time has decided *not* to force a balanced budget, *not* to be too optimistic about revenue and expenditures as we have been in the past, but in the climate of the times, to take a good honest look at ourselves.

It is important to remember that while the numbers show a shortfall this year, the amount is less than the actuals have turned out in the past, and session has cut back significantly on expenditures in some program areas while implementing a tight review process. We have plans with Bay Ridge Prep to be better stewards of the Parish House, renovating the Chapel and reconfiguring several additional spaces. BRUCA and our concert series for next year will be simpler, marketed more to institutions, and subject to regular review.

In addition, as your pastor I have a duty to point out that although we have had a net increase in membership for the second year in a row (that's great!), we have a shortfall not only in money but in leadership. We are going into this year's annual meeting with two open session seats. In some ways this is even more serious than the shortfall in monetary giving.

The church is the Body of Christ, which means it is, as the Apostle Paul wrote, the sum of *all* of its members. Many thanks to all who have taken on new responsibilities, and this is a reminder to *everyone* that the church is *you*; the church is not the church staff, nor is it limited to a few key people whom we just assume will make things happen for the rest of us. Nobody wants to feel pinned down to a commitment, but the old adage is still true: you get out of it what you put into it.

And...God loves you, God has gifted you, and God believes in you—and in Union Church!

Blessings,

Mary

COME TO THE LORD'S TABLE



Our worship services are every Sunday at 11am, followed by refreshments. Communion will be served on Sunday, February 1, and Sunday, March 1. Please join us!

DONATIONS FOR EASTER LILIES can

be made in memory of a loved one or in honor or celebration by contacting the church office at 718.745.0438 or giving your money on Sunday Service in the envelopes on the back table. Each plant costs \$10 and can be ordered February 17th through the deadline of March 16th.



ROSTER OF ELDERS TO SERVE COMMUNION

Coordinator: Mary Cusack
718.680.3441. If the date or dates you have been given does not suit you, please exchange them with a fellow elder, or if a replacement can not be found, please call Mary.



CONTINUE TO PRAY FOR all living in the midst of



war, poverty, natural and economic disaster; for prisoners and all who watch and pray for them, especially the Church of Gethsemane. Continue to pray for/stay in touch with the loved ones of

Barbara Briggs, Maryellen Van Royen and the Douglass family, the Moore family, the Attara family, the Peterson family, the Cleary family in their new home, Art Samuel and Mary Chamberlain, Iris Norstrand, Emile Serposs, Milford Anderson, Nazik David, Amanda Silverman, Bill Louisa, and Helen Kretiv; also Ed, Mark and Audrey, Helen, Wendy, and Sally.

THE BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE is open

to remember dear departed members of Union Church: 2/1—Virginia Villano; 2/8—Viola Ferretti; 2/15—Susan Ulyette; 2/22—Emma Smith; 3/1—Alice Seely; 3/8—June Aram; 3/15—Severin Norstrand; 3/22—Janet Louisa; and 3/29—Helene Ogurek.



ABOUT THE BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE

The Book of Remembrance is located in the glass-topped desk at the entrance to the Sanctuary. Each Sunday, it is opened to a memorial page for a dear, departed member. You are welcome to open the glass top and look at the books. Recently, it has become easier to find the page of a loved one. (Thanks to Katherine Greissman). The Book of Remembrance is really four volumes – one for each quarter of the year. The pages are arranged in chronological order according to date of death. Now there is an alphabetical directory in the front of each volume. In addition, there is a complete directory in the desk, covering all the books. This

alphabetical listing gives the name, date of death, volume and page.

It is not too late to be included on any memorial page. If you make a donation to Union Church, in memory of someone, your name will be added to that page. Please do look at the books with their beautiful calligraphy.

POINSETTIAS

We thank all those who made donations for the lovely poinsettias that grace the Sanctuary chancel:



Lorraine Green & Charles Scheffold - Loved Ones; The Lynchs – Our Family; Morag Mossawir – Loved Ones; Marie Nelson - Loved Ones; Olive and Dan Reich - Our Loved Ones; Arthur and Betty Samuel - Our Loved Ones; Eleanore Skoldberg - Loved

Ones; Alan and Joyce Smith - Our Loved Ones; Rev. Mary Speers – In Honor of Mary Chamberlain; Shirley Tuccillo - Loved Ones ; Ruth Ward - John Ward; Lillian Warren - Ed Adamski; The Ramsays - Loved Ones; The Van Royens - In Honor of Paul B. Douglass Sr.; and the Van Royens - In Memory of Carole Lamb.

DECEMBER AND JANUARY

FLOWERS

Chancel flowers were dedicated to the glory of God and given on: December 14th In Memory of Andrew Stutz from Andrea Stutz Zarou; January 11th In Memory of Emma Beck from David and Carolyn Ramsay; and January 18th In Memory of Edward J. Norstrand from Eddie Norstrand.



2008 ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

by Michele Hern, Property Committee

This summer found us busy with improvements to our sanctuary. We made some long needed repairs to a few areas of the roof which finally put an end to interior water damage we were dealing with.

Many hands and much laughter came together and revived the Sunday school room with fresh coats of bright paint and lots of TLC.

We re-wired the electricity supply in the kitchen and added power and outlets. The new outlets allow us to make coffee and heat hot water at the same time without having to crawl around on the floor for a power strip or unplug our refrigerator! What fun. We also added dimmers for the interior sanctuary lights so we will have options for lighting when we have concerts, performances and small, intimate gatherings.

Finally, after many layers of patches and repairs to our boiler, it was finally replaced this month prior to any potential damages or emergencies.

My personal thanks to Victor and Marek for being so genuinely concerned about our buildings and consistently wonderful to work with.

LENT: UNION CHURCH & BAY RIDGE CHURCHES

Beyond the recent TV commercial, the Biblical Hebrew word SHALOM (which shares the Semitic root SLM with Arabic) has many meanings. It means peace, but it also means wholeness, health, well-being, prosperity, all the beautiful things that can happen...*when everyone has enough, and everyone who has enough is satisfied with what they have.*

Our lectionary for Lent in Year B explores the sequence of covenants that God makes with human beings in the Bible. This year, we explore some of those meanings in our worship, special events, and Thursday evening "loaves and fishes" supper programs (bring a bag supper for yourself plus something to share), exploring God's covenant of peace in our series "Peace Is..."

Wednesday, February 25: Ash Wednesday

7:30 pm at Bay Ridge United Church, 636 BR Pkwy

Saturday, February 28: Peace Is...Healing

9am-12:30pm in the Sanctuary, massage, yoga, healing prayer: come share with others what heals you!

Sunday, March 1: Peace Is...Justice for All

11am Presbyterian Welcome Celebration, Communion

Thursday, March 5: Peace Is...a Full Heart

6:30pm "loaves and fishes" supper and Taizé evensong

Thursday, March 12: Peace Is...Understanding

6:30pm "loaves and fishes" supper: Come hear about the 4th Ave Church Christian-Muslim Sunday School!

Thursday, March 19: Peace Is...Justice for All

6:30pm "loaves and fishes" supper: come hear what's been happening at the Church of Gethsemane!

Thursday, March 26: Peace Is...Understanding

6:30pm "loaves and fishes" supper: Bruce MacIntyre talks about the Bklyn Coll. choir at Peking Olympics!

Monday, March 30: Peace Is...All Have Enough

6pm soup at Our Saviour's, 80th and 4th Ave, joint program with St Andrew the Apostle and others.

Thursday, April 2: Peace Is...a Full Heart

6:30pm "loaves and fishes" supper and Taizé evensong

Thursday, April 9: Maundy Thursday Supper

6:30pm intergenerational model seder with storytelling, singing, and a meal, culminating in the Lord's Supper

Friday, April 10: Good Friday Tenebrae

7:30pm traditional Tenebrae with the Lord's Supper, Fourth Avenue Presbyterian Church, 6753 4th Avenue

Saturday, April 11: Easter Vigil

9pm Redeemer-St John's Lutheran Church, 939 83rd St

Sunday, April 12: Easter Day!

11am festival worship at Union Church!

UNION CHURCH CONCERTS FEB 15 & MARCH 15

Union Church Concerts continue at 4pm the third Sunday of every month, under the direction of Union Church Minister of Music Vince Peterson:

4pm Sunday, Feb 15: Westminster Choral Scholars

of the Westminster Choir College in Princeton, NJ
Tom Colao, director

freewill offering supports music at Union Church

4pm Sunday, March 15: Requiem of Gabriel Fauré

with *Cantique de Jean Racine* and other works for voice

The Union Church Choir and members of the Academy of Union Church, Vince Peterson, Minister of Music
*Admission \$12 adults, \$8 seniors and children under 12
Childcare at both concerts for the young and the restless*

SUPPORT GROUP FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IS ONE YEAR OLD!

On February 4, 2008, two or three gathered in Starbucks with Union Church elder Isabel Morales, who is a professional advocate for people with disabilities and their families. Today, a year later, the group has grown to a pool of 18 regular participants, who gather for food and conversation in the meeting area of the Sanctuary on the first Monday of every month. Union Church is proud to sponsor this program in partnership with Parent to Parent of New York State. The February meeting will be moved to 11am Wednesday, February 4, the actual date of the anniversary, and after that the meetings return to Mondays at 11.

CHAPEL RENOVATIONS COMING IN 2009

Session is delighted to announce that in partnership with Bay Ridge Prep, our chapel is getting a facelift!

Last summer, the bright-eyed among you noticed a new coat of paint and a more open feeling. This year, we are getting all new, heavy-duty Pergo-style flooring and brand new upholstered wooden seating, to make our chapel brighter, warmer, and more welcoming for worship, as well music, drama, dance...a complement to the traditional worship space we already have in our Sanctuary, and much better stewardship of our chapel all year round.

Our beautiful walnut paneling and stained glass will remain, as will the air conditioning for summer, and we gain comfort and style as well as flexibility. We'll be able to move the piano and the wooden lectern anywhere we want them, set up the chairs in rows or in circles, with pews around the perimeter of the room and places to stack the chairs. We'll keep you posted...

CELEBRATE PRESBYTERIAN WELCOME MARCH 1

This year, in response to the vote of General Assembly to remove discrimination based on sexual identity from the Book of Order, the session of Union Church voted to become the twentieth congregation of Presbyterian Welcome, following Fifth Avenue Church, Brick Church, Lafayette Avenue and First Churches in Brooklyn, and a host of others in New York City and Hudson River Presbyteries in a collective witness to the grace of God and the movement of the Holy Spirit.

On the first Sunday of Lent, March 1, Rev. Mieke Vandersall, director of Presbyterian Welcome, will join Rev. Speers in leading worship at Union Church, for a special presentation to us of the chalice that Presbyterian Welcome gives to all its member churches. The choir will sing "Jesus, Give Us Your Peace" from the Rainbow Revival at G.A. last June (Vince Peterson and Rev. Speers sang in that, too!) and Union Church elder Mary Cusack

will sing the solo a few of us were fortunate to hear her sing with the Lafayette Inspirational Ensemble last May. Come to celebrate, give Rev. Vandersall a warm welcome, and participate in the Mystery Pal Exchange! Then on Monday, March 9 at 6pm, we are invited to the First Presbyterian Church at 12th Street and Fifth Avenue in the city, for the Lenten worship of Presbyterian Welcome, with Lisa Larges, national director of That All May Freely Serve, preaching.

RECENT MEMORIAL GIFTS

Arlene Ferretti in memory of her parents, Tom and Viola Ferretti; and Rev. Jo Tolley in memory of her husband, Rev. William Tolley.

WE ARE SAD TO ANNOUNCE the death of Barbara Briggs, who entered the Church Triumphant on December 28, 2008. Condolences may be sent to Brian Kasler in care of the church office.

UNION CHURCH PLAY GROUP

The Union Church playgroup has been a great success and will be approaching Session III. Play Group is a spacious place with lots of interesting things for a child to do, such as blocks, trains, housekeeping, and doll house, dress-up, puzzles, books, puppets, crafts, etc. A snack is provided along with a Story read by the director. There is also Music Time with songs and musical instruments.



Play Group is for toddlers and a caretaker, and meets Tuesday and Thursday from 9:30 – 11:30am and Monday and Wednesdays from 10:00 to 12:00pm in the basement of the church (7915 Ridge Blvd. corner of 80th Street and Ridge Blvd). The cost is \$175.00 – \$210.00 for a 10 to 12 week class.

A new afternoon class will be starting from 12:00 – 2:00pm. This class will be for toddlers ages 3-4 year old.

If you are interested in the program and would like more information or would like to visit the Playgroup please call Jody at 718.745.0438.

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT UNION CHURCH

by Kristin Miller

As you know, the church is more than the building and Sunday worship. Jesus told us that the church is about service, serving our fellow members and the community in which we live. There are too many activities taking place at Union Church to go into detail for this newsletter, but here are few of the 2008 highlights.

For Children:

- Our Sunday School provides education to our young congregants during the church service on Sundays, taught by a wonderful group of

volunteers in our newly painted Sunday School classroom.

- Last Spring, we held a mini-series for our “pre-teens”, those too old for Sunday School, but not quite old enough for adult bible studies. It was structured around four aspects of Christian life Spirituality, Theology, Politics, and Healing and attended by our 3 pre-teens and some friends.
- Over 60 children enjoy our Playgroups, which are now offered four days a week, and possibly expanding to one afternoon as well.
- At the request of Bay Ridge Parent Yahoo group, we worked a Toy Swap in late November.

For the Community:

- 40 adults and children enrolled in BRUCA clay classes.
- 40 participated in yoga classes, now offered both Monday and Wednesday evenings.
- We hosted the September meeting of the Presbytery Meeting of NYC for about 200 people, where 25 Union Church members volunteered their time. Attendees expressed their appreciation and love of our hospitality, lunch, and worship, especially the pick-up choir.
- Over 100 exercise in our gym, often for basketball and other team sports.
- Hundreds attend our 6 Sunday concerts plus 850 (yes, 850!) local school children attended two performances of Peter and the Wolf.
- We finally have a website that we can update ourselves: www.ucbr.org. If you have not visited it yet, now is the time! The calendar that has been included in your printed newsletters recently comes from the new website. 50 percent of our visitors this year say they “found us on the Net.”

Annual church events:

- 30 cheered at our Annual Coney Island baseball game in August.
- 23 people decorated wreaths for the Christmas season.

Spiritual, Mission and Educational Activities:

- 8 attended a BRUCA mini-series on “Art and Creativity” in June for four weeks of creative soul work.
- Our pastor attended the Bi-Annual National Presbyterian General Assembly in California to help support UC’s programs and mission.
- Joined Presbyterian Welcome in response to the denominations’ vote at the assembly for churches to more actively express our inclusively.
- In October, 7 people attend a workshop on creativity and the soul; they used black paper and white pencils to explore the healing energy of our spirits. This is part of our continuing Reflective Saturdays, which are now held about 3 times per year.

- Contributed to The Center of Family Life food bank (70 pounds), Mothers in Crisis, One Great Hour of Sharing, Peacemaking and Joy offerings, Christmas books and offerings for Gethsemane, and gave disaster relief money to the cyclone victims of Myanmar.
- Taizé Services are held every first Thursday, with a small, loyal following (5-8 people) where Christ's love is put into action in very profound ways for those who participate in the singing and prayers.

Shared activities with Bay Ridge Churches:

- Shared Lenten worship services.
- 15-20 adults attend Adult Wednesday Bible Program, held weekly at Redeemer St. John's with 5 Presbyterian churches in Bay Ridge, Sunset Park and Dyker Heights.
- 10 people attend a Bible Study every other Tuesday evening with Salem Lutheran at UC.
- Strawberry Fields picnic with the 3 other Presbyterian churches in Bay Ridge.

When taken all together, our little church is not as quiet as we may believe. In fact, it is vibrant, full of love and life. Keep up the "good works"!

WREATH-MAKING 2008 by Kristin Miller

23 people were in attendance: Mary Speers; Mary Chamberlain; Cristel Zepler; Joyce and Alan Smith; Peggy, Andrew and Catherine Greissman; David Smith; Kristin, Kora and Kate Lynch; Chiara and Luca Puglisi-Scandone; Victor, Isabel and Iliana Morales; Warren Gatto and Shin Oh Kang; Jamie, Tana, Madeline and Maisy Vuignier.

And a special thank you to:

- ❖ The Smiths and Lynches for picking up and delivering the greens to the church on Friday.
- ❖ The Smiths and Isabel Morales for providing refreshments.
- ❖ Mary Speers for bringing her huge Christmas music collection.
- ❖ Olive Reich for her "Martha Stewart" decorative touches.
- ❖ Mark for getting the space ready and cleaning up after we were done.
- ❖ Mary Cusack for coordinating the clean-up done by Mark, Joyce and Mary Cusack.
- ❖ Everyone who came, clippers in hand, to make and hang 18 wreaths for the church, and for all the extra special decorating touches that made the church look and smell so beautiful!

"MYSTERY PAL" EXCHANGE for LENT MARCH 1

The preparatory season of Lent, six weeks leading to Easter, begins Ash Wednesday, February 25th. During Lent people traditionally give up something precious and meaningful, so that every time they missed it, they would be reminded of God's goodness in giving it to them. This year many of us at Union Church will be

"giving up" our identities for Lent as we become "mystery pals" with one another.

The Committee on Evangelism and Member Care is again organizing Lenten "mystery pals" for all who sign up on Ash Wednesday, February 25th, or the first Sunday in Lent, March 1st. Each mystery pal will be asked to communicate *anonymously* with his or her selected "pal" once each week during Lent – with a friendly postcard, letter, birthday card, Bible verse, and at the end, perhaps an **optional token gift**. Each participant will know only that the mystery pal is another caring and sharing member of the Union Church community. All mysteries will be joyfully revealed on Easter Sunday, April 12th, when all mystery pals in attendance will introduce themselves during the coffee hour following the service.

If you will not be in church on Easter please remember to call your pal during Easter week and let them know who you are!

After worship this week or on March 1st, you will be asked to fill out a form with your *name, address, birth date (year optional), hobbies, and anything you collect*. At the conclusion of worship, you will pick the name of your designated "mystery pal" out of a hat. **ONLY YOU WILL KNOW THE PERSON'S NAME.**

Remember, you must *be* a mystery pal to someone, in order to *have* someone be a mystery pal to you.

Eligible Participants: All members and friends of Union Church of Bay Ridge who attend church February 25th or March 1st. Homebound members who wish to participate should mail their ballots to the church office prior to February 25th. The church office will then mail the information about your mystery pal.

Purposes of Mystery Pals: Mystery pals is a modern, living parable of the central mystery of our Christian faith and the presence of God amongst us. Through the mystery pals we may all experience first hand the "mystery" of the Lenten season, its penitence, its sacrifice, as well as the ultimate revelation of Easter. As we are ultimately alone in our relationship with God, so we are "alone" with the secret name of a pal. At the same time, we are experiencing the mysterious "presence" of another person who also shares with and cares about us.

Duties of Mystery Pals: Once a week during Lent, the participants should contact their pals *in writing*. Friendly postcards, notes, letters, birthday cards (if applicable), recipes, Biblical passages, poems, and a *token gift* at the end are encouraged. You are not expected to give a gift every week! Let them know you are thinking of them in some way. **BY NO MEANS SHOULD ANYONE'S IDENTITY BE REVEALED!** Keep it a secret! "Don't blow your cover!"

SALEM LUTHERAN-UNION CHURCH BIBLE STUDY

A Participant Perspective by Zack of Salem Lutheran Church



English majors are skeptical readers. Creative Writing majors are downright cynical. Armed with degrees in both English and Creative Writing, I was initially reluctant to join the Bible Study class held every other Tuesday night at Union Church – especially when I heard that class focused on a single short passage from Psalms. It sounded remarkably close to analyzing poetry, something I have spent my entire life avoiding.

But there is an important distinction to make between analyzing a text and responding to it. The method for the biweekly Bible Study at Union Church focuses on a method of reading the Bible that's so old, it's new. Instead of turning on my left brain and approaching the Bible as an intellectual, the "Lectio Divina" (spiritual reading) methods asks me to respond emotionally and find an understanding of Scripture through the heart.

This practice has roots that run infinitely deeper than any form of literary criticism, and though the modern world has not trained me to respond to what I read in this way, after one study session, it felt natural. More importantly, it was relaxing to know that there is no wrong response to the Bible and that everyone will interpret it according to their own emotional needs. The Bible is a remarkably adaptive text, and it continues to resonate with readers – or a least with most every reader who attended the class last Tuesday night.

After reading through the chosen passage three times group members take turns reading out loud while others listen; it's more difficult to be analytical when engaging with Bible as an oral tradition – a pattern begins to develop. I found myself drawn to the same words over and over again, and these words brought up in me thoughts of what I had been doing, what I hadn't been doing, and what I should have been doing. I shared these thoughts with the groups, and they in turn shared their thoughts on the passage with me. It is incredible to learn about the multitude of ways different people can approach such a small patch of words and come away with such different messages. It is even more incredible to think that I didn't judge their interpretations, because I instantly understood how their interpretations of Scripture were their reality, their personal relationship with God.

Every session ends with group members praying for each other that we should have the strength to listen to what the week's Bible passage has told us.

I have spent an entire life trying to tamp down the hyper-critical aspects of my character, and this biweekly Bible Study assists me in doing just that. I look forward to attending again, and I believe that more participants

would make discussions even livelier and the epiphanies even more profound.

AFTER THE HOLIDAYS – WHAT? by Ruth Ward

There are several options: (a) sit back and toast our toes (figuratively or literally) by the fire, (b) pursue with diligence any resolution and vowing this year to keep them, and (c) slip back into the former more comfortable lifestyle of feeling good about our earnest wish to do more, even if not quite achieving it. (C) is probably the operative common denominator because of course we really did mean to get to church more, be active, and be more giving of our time and talents.

But there ought to be a stirring within us, resulting in option (d): opening our hearts -- for something has happened. The Christ Child has been born anew on Christmas and when we welcome Him each year our lives should be changed, perhaps like the Shepherd's. Angels revealed the birth of the tiny babe to them first, and wrought fear, excitement, and curiosity in their hearts. They felt compelled to journey and view this scene. Wise Men, themselves of noble birth, also traveled per Herod's decree, led by a mysterious star, to see the infant.

Acknowledging His holiness, they knelt and offered Him gifts. We too sing our glories each year for the miracle never loses its luster.

The point is, after the holidays there should be a resurgence, not a let-down. A renewal of our lives, celebrating God's amazing gift of His Son. How typical of God; His only Son came as a baby, born to rule with love and forgiveness, rather than a mighty king.

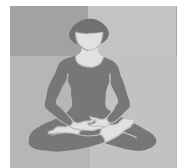
The wonder is real. It is we who must separate ourselves from the glitter and bustle of December 25th, and make it so.

FOOD MISSION by Ruth Ward

Jill Stoler alerted us to the need for Union Church to be involved in helping to lessen hunger. Then it was approaching holiday season. Hunger, however, does not know seasons. This is just a reminder: keep bringing in cans or non-perishables on a regular basis. If all of us does a small part, it will grow. The main thing is not to let it wane. Put a note on your fridge or whatever it takes and buy an extra can or two when you shop. You will feel better, and so will the person who gets them.

YOGA by Kristin Miller

Yoga has begun again! Classes are every **Monday and Wednesdays from 6:45 to 8:15pm** downstairs in the playgroup area of the Union Church basement (on the corner of 80th Street and Ridge Blvd). Please bring a mat and a towel and arrive a few minutes early. **NO EXPERIENCE NEEDED** for the gentle, restorative class. Open to all; cost is \$15.00 per session – call Kristin at 718-745-6594. No pre-registration required.



CHURCH CALENDAR FOR THESE TWO MONTHS

This is the internet edition of the Union Church newsletter. The print edition contains a printout of the website calendar for the months covered by the newsletter. To see the calendar, click on the Calendar page link in the sidebar to the right, then click the tab that says "monthly". You can go backward and forward until you find the month you want. Click on a day or an event to get a more complete description.

UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS

If you worship with us and would like your birthday listed in our newsletter, fill in the birthday calendar at the back of the sanctuary with your birth date or call the office.



February

8 – Margaret Smith
12 – Marie Nelson
13 – Walter Boll
13 – Matthew Louisa

March

1 - Olive Reich
5 – Carolyn Gamaliy
6 – Bruce MacIntyre
22 – Isabel Morales