

The Meeting House Times

The Congregational Church of Salisbury, United Church of Christ

January 2010



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Pamela Wyeth, Editor

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A Glimpse into Who We Are

Meet the Webers

Jeanette and Bob Weber joined our congregation in March, 2008, but have had a second home in Taconic off Hammertown Road since 1998. They lived in Glen Rock, NJ, for 40 years and still own their house there, "but we live three quarters of the time in Salisbury. We love it here!"

Bob spent 43 years with the Bulova Watch Company, ending his career as their VP of Operations. He still does some environmental consulting for them on sites the company formerly owned. Jeanette was an editor, author, and consultant for middle school and high school textbooks with McGraw-Hill Publishing. Most of her work was in the fields of health, technology, and family consumer sciences (what we old folks knew as "home economics").

She used her experience in this last field to revive the Congregational Church Fudge Project at the recent Fall Festival; under her direction we made lots of delicious fudge for sale, though some never made it into the baggies.

Bob and Jeanette's three children and four grandchildren are spread across the country, but fortunately, the Webers like to travel. They also enjoy gardening and good food and wine. Jeanette has been involved with the WSS Trade Secrets and has volunteered to head up our 2010 Fall Festival. In that capacity we're sure the Webers will soon be meeting many more of you.

And they're very easy to get to know.

-Lee Collins



The Bell Choir was a big part of our annual festive Christmas Concert on December 13th.

The Prayer of Mary



It's amazing what deep meaning can be found behind symbols - and the things that can be inferred from them that might inform and inspire our lives.

Faith. Hope. Love. Joy. The candles of Advent. The meaning behind them has become all but static for most

of us, who have grown up with the practice of setting up these candles and lighting them over a 4-week time period, only to culminate in the lighting of the fifth - the Christ candle. But that one subtle candle that emerges before the final one - named "Mary's candle" - is traditionally the candle of joy. I have to wonder, though. Is *joy* the best qualifier for what Mary was experiencing at the moment she realized what was happening to her?

Think about it.

She was being told by an uninvited visitor of presumably intimidating proportions that she would soon find herself pregnant out of wedlock - an act in that society that would warrant, at the very minimum, her shunning by the rest of the community...if not death.

Then she would have to tell her fiancé about it. Then her family. Good luck with that.

Then she would have to come to terms, if she believed any of what was happening to her in this strange moment, with the idea that this event would happen outside of the "natural way of things." A virgin, pregnant with...*WHOM???* That's right - the son of God. Overshadowed by the Holy Spirit (another concept most likely foreign to her understanding of God) and charged with bearing the Messiah to the world.

She was to take care of him, raise him in the ways of God, watch him begin to take on the destiny he was born for, and eventually have his life prematurely ended in order to fulfill all the purposes for his coming. And she was to be his mother...throughout all this terrific responsibility and ultimate agony and heartache.

All of this, probably running through her mind as her strange uninvited guest unfolds this story too incomprehensible to absorb. So when Mary comes out with her response, I sometimes think the absolute irony of it is lost on most of us...

May it be done to me according to your word.

Are you kidding me? Is she crazy? Is she completely out of her mind? Or has something else happened inside her?

Tradition notwithstanding, I would dare be so brash as to say that the candle most fitting to represent her confusing, amazing, and utterly confounding evening would be the one of *faith*.

Who would invite these things, allow these things, even submit to these events willingly unless they had somehow found within themselves a faith that surpassed all the pain and loss they were to discover from such acceptance? Yes, of course, she was to be the vehicle of God for bringing the Christ into the world - an amazing, worthy cause to celebrate in many senses - but the cost of such a fate she was also keenly aware of there, in that moment. And still she accepted it.

Mary was a woman of faith. And at her age (probably 14 or 15 years old), such faith could only have come as a gift from God himself. Even the faith that would be required of her to subject herself to Gabriel's message had to come from God. And so it did.

After Mary prays her prayer of acquiescence to a God she barely knew and a future she could barely see or understand, she amazes us again and *blesses God for choosing her*. This would be akin to Hosea praising God for instructing him to marry a prostitute (which He did) and watching her continually be unfaithful to him (which she was), as a metaphor for how Israel was acting toward God. Or Job, blessing God in the midst of his loss and grief. Who could praise Him for such a charge, and with such consequences? Who could bless God in the midst of these things?

But Mary did. She saw the joy in that life she was told she would live, in the midst of the pain it would inevitably solicit. And she was slowly coming to realize she would be the vessel through which God would pour out a type and intensity of love humankind had yet to experience. She would carry in her womb the hope of humanity.

But she would be *carried herself* by the faith required to submit to this calling.

God is a wonderful God. And even in trying times; no, *especially* in trying times, He remains the one whose heart beats for us with a love so great, that 2000 years later the season of Advent actually continues to exist - a season marked by the extreme love of God for the world. This is the God we can have faith in. This is the One who carries us. And this is the God who enables us to see circumstances, not only as they are, but as they may be - and the One who promises to hold us and keep us through all He calls us to be and do.

In the midst of very challenging times, various losses, and the unpredictability of these days, God can give us the faith, the utter faith, to echo the prayer of Mary, even when the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel seems barely visible, so that it may be our prayer as well.

May it be done to me according to your word.

Pastor Steve

Email: rev.steve@salisburycongregational.org
Blog: <http://salisburycongregational.wordpress.com>



Courtesy Utah Valley Univ. website

Christmas 2009

The Giving Tree Christmas Pageant Caroling at Geer

These photographs (right and below) and the Bell Choir on the front page, by Lee Collins, are available online, where you'll be able to see them a bit larger.



Christian Action ... in Action

The Christian Action committee is pleased to report that they have contributed \$7000 to a Ghana Well Project. This is a UCC Global Ministries project and promotes the construction of wells in desperate and much needed areas in Ghana, West Africa. Our well will be in the community of Twereboana in the Jasikan district of the Volta Region. There is a serious need for water there. The contractor, Kwasi Appoh, has indicated that the work can be completed by February/March of 2010. We will be kept apprised of the progress and when the dedication date will be.

The committee does not yet have financial results from the Global Crafts Boutique, but would like to thank all of you who supported this cause. We also thank all of you who took Giving Tree ornaments and brought generous offerings to the church to be delivered to those in need.

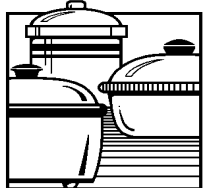
**We send our best wishes to ALL for a very
Healthy and Happy New Year.**

- Susie Belcher, Christian Action Committee



Geer Village resident Bill Fox on the balcony accompanying with his flute.

Join Us For Supper



Potluck

There will be a potluck supper on Friday, January 22nd at 5:30 for anyone and everyone who would like a casual evening out. Bring a large main dish or salad (either homemade or take-out) to share. Bread, dessert and beverage will be provided. Bring a friend. Bring a family. Cartoons for the kids.

There is no need to RSVP. Do you need a ride? Wondering about a cancellation due to winter weather? Give one of us a call: Barbara Collins (860-435-0051) or Sarah Rydingsword (860-435-9479).



The Department of Lonely Clothes hangs by the basement stairs, and the hooks are getting full. Please stop and look for that hat, scarf, jacket, or whatever that you've been missing. In January we'll be donating the remaining items to Good Will.

From the Deacons

We had the wonderful opportunity this past November to welcome a former pastor of the church, Reverend John Hay, to preside at a Sunday service. He closed his sermon reading not once, but three times, a poem entitled "I Will Try" by Mary Oliver. He emphasized poetry should be read a number of times for its full impact. It occurs to me that biblical passages, prayers, and hymns have a similar effect. They offer comfort and inspiration again and again throughout our lives.

As we move into the quiet of winter, we can take the opportunity to read and pray and sing, both the familiar and the new. May the experience awaken our souls in surprisingly wonderful ways. **The Deacons wish you a very happy and healthy New Year.**

Here is another fine poem from Mary Oliver to brighten your winter days.

Red Bird

Red bird came all winter
firing up the landscape
as nothing else could.

Of course I love the sparrows,
those dun-colored darlings,
so hungry and so many.

I am a God-fearing feeder of birds.
I know He has many children,
not all of them bold in spirit.

Still, for whatever reason-
perhaps because the winter is so long
and the sky so black-blue,

or perhaps because the heart narrows
as often as it opens-
I am grateful

that red bird comes all winter
firing up the landscape
as nothing else can do.

Mary Oliver

- Janet Kaufman for the Board of Deacons

Take your Potted Plant to Church



Let's have flowers for this winter from January through March. Gardens are empty and potted plants are always welcome, a simple bouquet or sprawling branches, dried grasses or that house plant you love can be a symbol of joy, celebration, or memory of loved ones.

Check the calendar posted near the parish hall entrance and fill in those spaces! For the first Sunday of the month, communion is served on the table, and small arrangements look lovely in the baptismal font (not on the piano). Thanks so much. And be sure to ask that a note to be added to the bulletin.

- Debby Mark, Hospitality Committee

*Happy Birthday
Alice!*



At a recent Fellowship Hour we helped Alice Gustafson celebrate her 90th.

Here she is (on the right) with Rosie Bell and Ruth and Alden Tyrol. Good cake, too!

**Deadline for the February Newsletter:
Wednesday, January 20th**

First Impressions of Iraq from the Air

~ Reds and Greens ~

We lifted out of Vienna Austria, through abundant sunshine of a late November morning. The many wind turbines dotted the landscape, enormous even from a



Not your usual picture of Iraq. Taken on the way from a place close to the Iranian border: just above the town of Dohuk which has a large hydro dam and lake. Dramatic thunderstorm and wonderful clouds.

plane, their white and red propellers casting slowly rotating shadows across the farmland. The red roof tiles of the white houses below showed up like little dominoes, orderly and neat, while the faint green of winter wheat cast a verdant blush over the surrounding fields. Hedgerows lined up neatly; the

long demarcations and linear layout showed remnants of tractor farming, and one could almost hear the regular rhythm of the ghost tractor engines working their way back and forth, back and forth, during the growing season. Then I fell asleep.

We had entered Iraqi airspace by the time I woke up. Magnificent mountains marched as far as I could see, snow capped on top, jagged and rugged as they tumbled down to narrow valleys. But here too, a faint green could be seen. One can tell so much about an area by looking at the

farm land patterns. Are they cut up, small, higgledy-piggledy? Or large, straight, organized?

As the mountain ranges receded behind us, the valleys opened up, home to the many tributaries of the mighty Tigris river. We could have been in Nebraska. Or Austria. The fields were large and long. Clearly tractors work this land. Plastic greenhouses could be seen reflecting red in the late afternoon sun, as incongruent as the occasional “tell”, small mounds or hills left from some ancient civilization (with which Iraq abounds). As we approached Erbil, I was astonished to see circular fields, their design indicating large-scale spray irrigation systems. We flew in over well-organized orchards and a huge park full of fountains, mature trees and lawns. The late fall had turned many of the trees red and orange, and the Kurdish use of bright colors made the houses next to the airport look like Lego land. No tanks or Bradleys on the tarmac in front of the cute new arrival building. I suppose I was expecting something like Afghanistan, but the size and regularity of the fields, the newly constructed houses and apartment blocks, even the clean shop windows say “this is different”.

- Anne Williams
Erbil, Iraq Nov. 29, 2009

From the editor: This comes to us, with Anne's permission, through Janet Kaufman who is in fairly regular email contact with this peripatetic member of the congregation. I hope we'll continue to be able to have these glimpses from Anne (and others?) into a wider world.



Available on our Website
www.salisburycongregational.org

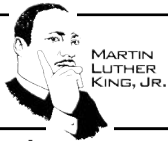
Photographs

Be sure to check our website for wonderful photographs taken by Lee Collins at some of our seasonal events. They can be found either on the “Recent Events” page or “Life of our Church.”

You can also find a monthly church calendar that we try to keep up-to-date, and there's no excuse for missing a member's birthday. Just check the birthday list right under the calendar.




Many have asked for copies of Pastor Steve's Advent messages. As of this week, we have put them on our website for anyone to read online or download, print and read at their leisure. They can be found at: www.salisburychurch.org/pastorspage.



JANUARY



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					 1 New Year's Day	2
10:00 - Worship & Communion <i>(No church school; crib/toddler care is available.)</i> 11:15 - Board of Trustees	4	5	10:00 - Prayer Group 7:30 - Choir Rehearsal <i>Epiphany</i>	7 5:15 - Bell Choir Rehearsal	8	9
10:00 - Worship & Church School 11:15 - Board of Christian Action 5:00 - Youth Group <i>Baptism of the Lord</i>	11	12	13 7:30 - Choir Rehearsal	14 5:15 - Bell Choir Rehearsal	15 <i>Martin Luther King Day</i>	16
17 10:00 - Worship & Church School 11:15 - Church Council	18	19	20 7:30 - Choir Rehearsal	21 5:15 - Bell Choir Rehearsal	22 5:30 - Potluck Supper	23
24 10:00 - Worship & Church School 11:15 - Board of Deacons 5:00 - Confirmation Class	25	26	27 7:30 - Choir Rehearsal	28 5:15 - Bell Choir Rehearsal	29	30
31 10:00 - Worship & Church School 11:15 - Board of Religious Education	<i>January 18-25, 2010 - Week of Prayer for Christian Unity</i>					



- 1st Don Mayland
- 2nd Joy Fitting
- 2nd Ron Jones
- 8th Nicky Downs
- 15th Ashley Allyn
- 16th Owen Beck
- 19th Lee Collins
- 20th Andre LaFosse
- 20th Jeanette Weber
- 21st Anna Beck
- 21st Dick Taber
- 23rd Janet Offensend
- 27th Edith Blodgett
- 30th Rick Morrill
- 30th Bob Newman

Reminder!

Please remember those in our communities in need of the basics. Non-perishable food is always welcome, and can be left in the baskets in the narthex and the parish hall corridor.

OWL's Kitchen Basket



CAROLYN RONAYNE OCTOBER 15, 1911 - DECEMBER 7, 2009

"Carolyn Ronayne was one of my favorite people while I worked at Noble Horizons. I loved that she was always excited about life. She was naturally positive and it would rub off on others."

- Stephanie

"I worry that the person who thought up Muzak may be thinking up something else." - Lily Tomlin

Shirley & Marcy

A mom was concerned about her kindergarten son walking to school. He didn't want his mother to walk with him. She wanted to give him the feeling that he had some independence but yet know that he was safe.

So she had an idea of how to handle it. She asked a neighbor if she would please follow him to school in the mornings, staying at a distance, so he probably wouldn't notice her.

She said that since she was up early with her toddler anyway, it would be a good way for them to get some exercise as well, so she agreed.

The next school day, the neighbor and her little girl set out following behind Timmy as he walked to school with another neighbor girl he knew. She did this for the whole week.

As the two walked and chatted, kicking stones and twigs, Timmy's little friend noticed the same lady was following them as she seemed to do every day all week. Finally she said to Timmy, "Have you noticed that lady following us to school all week? Do you know her?"

Timmy nonchalantly replied, "Yeah, I know who she is."

The little girl said, "Well, who is she?"

"That's just Shirley Goodnest," Timmy replied, "and her daughter Marcy."

"Shirley Goodnest? Who the heck is she and why is she following us?"

"Well," Timmy explained, "every night my Mom makes me say the 23rd Psalm with my prayers, cuz she worries about me so much. And in the Psalm, it says, 'Shirley Goodnest and Marcy shall follow me all the days of my life', so I guess I'll just have to get used to it!"

Homework

When Dad came home he was astonished to see Alec sitting on a horse, writing something. "What on earth are you doing there?" he asked.

"Well, the teacher told us to write an essay on our favorite animal. That's why I'm here and that's why Susie's sitting in the goldfish bowl!"



Just for KIDS

Make a joyful noise

people often gather with noisemakers to celebrate the promise of a new year. Be thankful and joyful for the many blessings in your life.

Using the musical note code, write the words of Psalm 100:2 (NIV) in the correct order below.

CODE: before come gladness him joyful LORD songs the with Worship



* * * * *

_____ the _____ ;



_____ .



Answer: Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.

