

Revelations

Community Presbyterian Church of Ben Avon ~ Pittsburgh, PA 15202

Celebrating the Advent and Christmas Seasons



- by Pastor Page Creach

The Pastor's Pen

The season of Advent and Christmas has come again. We are lighting candles in the darkest month of the year, singing songs, saying prayers, and giving in the spirit of hope, peace, joy, and love. As we celebrate the God who came to us in Jesus Christ, we watch for signs around us that assure us that God is with us, deeply loving this world, desiring to bring hope, joy, and life to all.

May the presence of Christ be kindled in your hearts in this special time. Do not let your heart be troubled, let your heart believe in God. Let your spirit rejoice in God, who is glad to bring us goodness and grace.

Please join us for worship this Advent and Christmas season:

November 30: Advent I	Christmas Hope
December 7: Advent II	Christmas Peace and Communion
December 14: Advent III	Christmas Joy and Alternatives Gifts Mission Fair
December 21: Advent IV	Christmas Love and the Children tell the Christmas Story
December 24: Christmas Eve	Two Services: Christmas Joy and the Joy Offering
7:00 pm	A Candlelight service designed especially for children and the child in all of us.
9:00 pm	A Candlelight service for all.

In hope,
Page

Children Share the Christmas Story Sunday, December 21st at 10:30 am

You are invited to join together with your church family as our children share the story of Jesus' birth.

On this special Sunday, our children lead us in worship to celebrate the simple gift of a baby, given to the world.

All children will have an opportunity to participate that morning. If your child and/or guests would like to be involved in the service, please be in the Fellowship Hall by 9:00 a.m. on the morning of December 21st.

Volunteers are always welcome to help get children into costumes that morning.



Combined Worship Service and Cookie "Pot-Luck" Fellowship Hour December 28, 2008—10:30 a.m.

There will only be one worship service on Sunday, December 28 at 10:30 a.m. The regular 8:30 a.m. service with communion will resume Sunday, January 4, 2009. In addition, there will be no Sunday School classes that day.

The Fellowship and Evangelism Committee invites you to bring your leftover Christmas goodies to share with your church family after the 10:30 a.m. service.

Cookies, cheese plates, cakes—even fruitcakes—are welcome! Punch and coffee will be provided. Plan to come whether you can bring something or not!



Adult Sunday School Opportunities for the Advent Season

Join us for Adult Sunday School at 9:15 a.m. each Sunday as we wait in joyful anticipation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. (Please note that the final class on December 21 will be held in the conference room upstairs while the children use Fellowship Hall to prepare for the 10:30 a.m. worship service.)

We have selected a curriculum entitled *Advent Through the Eyes of Those Who Wait*.

- **November 30** – Fellowship Hall
Learn about the life and ministry of John the Baptist.
- **December 14** – Fellowship Hall
Talk about Mary, the mother of Jesus.
- **December 21** – Conference Room upstairs
Discuss Elizabeth, Mary's cousin.

Adults are also encouraged to participate in the Church Christmas Story with the children during the 10:30 a.m. worship service on December 21st. Please call Melanie Hughes-Holcomb at 412-761-1233 if you are interested in participating.



Upcoming December Events

- Sunday, December 7—2nd Sunday of Advent
10:30 a.m. * Worship with communion
- Sunday, December 14—3rd Sunday of Advent
6:00 p.m. * Community Christmas Festival
- Sunday, December 21
10:30 a.m. * Children Enacting Word during the worship service
11:30 a.m. * Fellowship Hour hosted by the Christian Education Committee in honor of Melanie Hughes-Holcomb
12:30 p.m. * Christmas caroling
- Wednesday, December 24
7:00 p.m. * Family Christmas Eve Service
9:00 p.m. * Traditional Christmas Eve Service
- Thursday and Friday, December 25 and 26
Church Office Closed for Christmas
- Sunday, December 28
10:30 a.m. * Combined Worship Service
- 8:30 Worship resumes January 4

Special Adult Education Presentation: The Presbyterian Church in Iraq December 7th at 9:15 a.m. – Fellowship Hall

On Sunday, December 7th, the Adult Christian Education Committee will host a presentation by Carol Haeussner and her husband, Dr. Charles Haeussner. They are members of the Fox Chapel Presbyterian Church where they have been active as Deacons, Elders, as well as in Stephen Ministry, Adult Education, and Mission Committees.

Carol's parents were Christian missionaries in Iraq for 30 years. Carol lived in the northern Iraqi city of Kirkuk where her father started the first Protestant Church there in the 1930's. Following the fall of Saddam Hussein, Carol was able to contact that church again. It is now the most active Presbyterian Church in Iraq. Carol will give us the history of that church in Kirkuk and bring us up to date with its current situation.

Carol and Charles will describe and illustrate with recent photographs the current status of the five Presbyterian churches currently functioning in Iraq. This is an inspiring story of a successful Presbyterian mission that was started almost 80 years ago. The Presbyterian Church has survived monarchy, revolution, dictatorship, and war and still exists today as a positive Christian influence in the Muslim world in Iraq.

The Haeussners will explain PCUSA involvement through its Iraq Partnership Network and what our church can do to help and support them. There is an Extra Commitment Opportunity Fund which was established to help our Presbyterian Churches in Iraq. The only funding that these churches receive comes from individuals and congregations that donate money through this fund. There will be a free will offering collected at the end of the presentation to support this fund.

The Fellowship and Evangelism Committee Asks for Your Help with Cookies for the Community Christmas Festival

It is that time of year when CPCBA members are asked to get out their favorite cookie recipe and make two dozen cookies to serve as refreshments for the Live Nativity on the evening of December 14.

Cookie tins will be available on the desk in the Narthex beginning December 7. Pick one up and return it with your delicious cookies on Sunday morning, December 14.



CPCBA Annual Community Christmas Festival Sunday, December 14 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

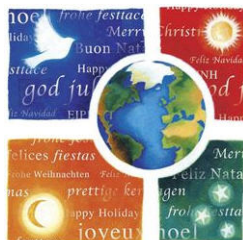
A Simple Gift, with a Simply Amazing Message...

This world is so full of busy choices, we want to offer you this choice of 2 hours to slow your pace and enjoy the world that Jesus came to save. Huddle together around a fire barrel, relax in a pew and let the songs of angels wash over you, let your children touch a warm wooly piece of the Nativity, break pumpkin bread together with your neighbors and remember that the simple gift of the Nativity was created with you in mind. Remember the birth of a baby savior and the overwhelming love that a simple gift brings to you. Let it lift your soul and bring you joy.

On December 14th from 6:00-8:00 p.m. our church will host an event for the whole community. We will throw our arms and doors wide open this holy holiday season, so invite your friends, tell the neighbors and gather together.

- ◆ Our annual **Live Nativity** will appear on the front lawn, complete with real animals, the holy family, shepherds, angels and wise people. Recapture that spirit of joy at the birth of the new baby Jesus, as you gaze like shepherds upon the live Nativity
- ◆ Then move into the Sanctuary to warm your hearts with songs of the season as presented by the **Avonworth High School Chorus followed by a Hymn Sing**. Let it remind you of the glory of the angel's music on that first joyful Christmas.
- ◆ **NEW!** In the Fellowship Hall tour the **Alternative Gift Fair**. Find an original and meaningful gift that will benefit someone in need, or give your time as a gift to organizations who serve the less fortunate. There will be displays from many mission and service organizations around the world and right here in Pittsburgh. Purchase Fair Trade coffee, foods, crafts & gifts. Buy a meal for a needy family, a blanket for the homeless or help heat the home of an elderly person. Great gifts indeed.

We will need assistants to host various tables. This is a simple job of greeting guests to your table and showing them the items available. Look for the letter in your mailbox, detailing the opportunities.



December Youth Activities

November was a restful month for CPCBA youth group activities, but several youth kept busy taking part in their school plays, *You Can't Take it With You*



and *The Front Page*. The youth are now getting geared up for the busy month of December which starts with the Middle School retreat to Ligonier Camp and Conference Center on the 5th and 6th.

The rest of the month includes volunteering to pack Christmas presents for the Salvation Army on the 8th, Community Christmas Festival on the 14th, and Christmas Caroling on the 21st. The Middle School and High School youth will also have their Christmas parties on the 19th and 21st respectively during the normal youth group time where we will enjoy festivities, have a white elephant gift exchange, and discover the differences in the Gospel accounts of the Christmas story.



Confirmation Class for 8th Graders to Begin January 18, 2009

All 8th Graders are invited to take part in the upcoming Confirmation Classes. It is part of a passage to maturity, but also a time of fun, play and study about who they are, what they believe, how they fit into the life of the church and how God fits into the rest of their lives.

We begin with a parent's meeting, followed by a retreat for all 8th graders.

The first meeting for all 8th graders AND their parents is Sunday, January 18th at 12:00 p.m. at the church. Lunch is provided.

Please RSVP to the church at 761-1233

Following the meeting, kids and staff will depart for an overnight retreat, returning the 19th. (Monday is Martin Luther King day with no school.)

YES we will once again incorporate the popular **Mentoring** program into the Confirmation experience. Any member of the church is eligible to be a Mentor, no Biblical or Theological genius required.

Please contact Mike Mullin at 412-761-1233 if you may be interested.

Many Thanks to All Who Contributed to the 2-Cents-A-Meal Collection

On Sunday, November 9th \$624.16 was collected as the little red wagon made its way through the sanctuary collecting our congregation's donations to the 2-cents-a-meal program



This year our 4th & 5th graders have been very sincere in their research and learning about our hunger donations; they have chosen to donate our collection to the Christian Children's Fund which operates in 32 countries offering nutrition, education, disaster relief and new sustainable livelihoods for impoverished families.

In addition, a portion of the donation will be used to help the North Boroughs Meals on Wheels program.

Many thanks to you for participating in this program that gives our children a sense of what they can do to bring the love and care of Christ to others.

Local Opportunity to Participate in the Mr. Rogers Sweater Drive or to Donate Food To the North Boroughs Food Pantry

Bring donations to the Community Christmas Festival on Sunday, December 14.

Bring a "gently cared for" sweater that night to contribute to the Mr. Rogers sweater drive *or* bring a non-perishable food item to contribute to the local food bank. These gifts will be shared with our local community.

Share the word with your friends and neighbors so that they can have to opportunity to support their local community as well.

2009 Pledge Summary to Date

Many thanks to all of those who have returned their pledge card for the 2009 year. Of the 332 potential giving units, 132 pledge cards have been received through November 21, 2008.



The total dollars pledged so far for 2009 is \$314,473.

Breakdown of pledges received to date:

- Number of increased pledges: 38
(increased \$15,707 over their previous pledge)
- Number of decreased pledges: 25
(decreased \$26,746 from their previous pledge)
- Number of pledges staying the same: 55
- Number of new pledges: 14 (totaling \$22,985)

History of pledges not yet received:

- Number of units pledging in 2008, but not yet received for 2009: 72
(their pledges totaled \$94,782 last year)
- Number of units that did not pledge in 2008 or yet in 2009: 128

Christian Education Director Melanie Hughes-Holcomb To Begin a New Adventure in 2009

Greetings Dear Friends,

After 9 wonderful years at Community Presbyterian Church, it is with a mix of sadness and comfort at the plans God has for all of us that I ask you to accept my resignation. I feel God is calling me on to other work in our community. Though I will not be here as your Christian Education Director, I will remain your neighbor, your friend and your sister in Christ.

I cannot thank you enough for all of the wonderful experiences and opportunities I have had as your Christian Education Director. We have shared friendship, laughter, tears, and we have both grown in so many ways. But most importantly, you have shared your wonderful children. They have taught me so much and made the words of Jesus in Mark 10:15 more deeply meaningful than ever. They bring joy and a renewed spirit with their open hearts, honest natures and wonder at the amazing stories found in our old dusty Bibles.

God has truly blessed me through knowing all of you over these years and I will be forever grateful. This congregation has always been kind, supportive and encouraging and I know you will be so for the next person lucky enough to work with you in Christian Education.

Again, my most heartfelt thanks for all that we have shared in my tenure here. You have been the light of God in my life. Grace and Peace to you all.

Most Sincerely,
Melanie Hughes-Holcomb

"Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it at all." - Mark 10:15

Newsletter
DEADLINE

for January
Revelations
is
December 15

The Christian Education Committee Thanks Melanie Holcomb For All of Her Years of Service to CPCBA

After nine years as CPCBA's Director of Christian Education, Melanie Hughes-Holcomb is following her call to the greater community and hopes to become an entrepreneur and open a local coffee shop. Along with her budding barista talent, Melanie's natural hostess abilities, creative flair and organizational skills will certainly be assets in her new endeavor.

The Christian education committee is very grateful to Melanie, who will continue to serve as Christian Education Director until the end of December, for her contributions to the program over the last nine years. She has been the 'pied piper of CPCBA'; if you are looking for Melanie, follow the throngs of young children.

For our Community Presbyterian Church of Ben Avon congregation this is an opportunity to share Melanie and her many talents with the larger community. Please join us in a celebration of Melanie and her ministry with us at the Fellowship Hour on December 21st following the 10:30 a.m. service.

Clair Cranville and Rebecca Kurtz
Christian Education Committee

Saying Goodbye To A Staff Member

by Pastor Page Creach

When a staff member of the church leaves, the need to say goodbye is important. For one thing, it acknowledges that this can be a trying experience for the congregation. For another thing it always means a change for the life of the church.

On December 31, Melanie Hughes-Holcomb, who has been our Director for Christian Education for nine years, will be leaving her work here to pursue other work in the community to which she feels called. We will send her with our blessing and we will pray for her as she departs from us. Also, we will celebrate her life and work among us these years with a church fellowship hour given in her honor on **December 21, following the worship service, in the narthex.**

While Melanie will no longer be a part of our Christian Education, worship or fellowship life in the church due to separation ethics for the church staff, she will still be a neighbor. No doubt, many of you will maintain your friendship with her, and friendships are a treasure.



Thank You Notes

To all my wonderful friends at CPCBA,

When Ray was diagnosed 5 months ago with esophageal cancer we knew we were in for a rough ride but little did we know just how rough it was going to be. We could NOT have done it all these months without YOU!! YOUR prayers, your meals, your cards, your emails, your hugs, your gifts, your altar flowers, your visits, your nurturing and your love sustained us through Ray's illness and his death.

Ray felt so comfortable with Page and appreciated so much her concern, her caring and personal prayers and pastoral care. Ray expressed to me his great relief knowing we, his family, would be cared for in all ways by our church.

We miss Ray terribly but we are relieved to know he is out of pain and suffering and is resting peacefully in the paradise of Heaven.

Thank you and God Bless You,
Jan, Margot (Matt Dunkle),
and Carson Bruno



My heartfelt thanks to all of you who provided foods, cards, phone calls and most importantly prayers during my recovery from surgery.

My family and I are very blessed to have had such a wonderful circle surround us. I send my sincere thanks, peace and blessings to all of you.

Mary Louise Fowkes
and family

NUTS...NUTS..NUTS

Sometimes you feel like a nut, sometimes you don't!

Have you found that during the Christmas Season, you need a small gift, something for the hostess, the mailman, your great neighbor or a snack for Santa himself!

Check out the nuts for sale on the desk in the Narthex. There will be chocolate covered almonds, cashews and cranberry mix—all for \$10 or less. They are wonderfully fresh, and come from Pittsburgh Snax Co., owned by Rick Cuneo. This will be the easiest shopping trip yet!

Merry Christmas!

Mission Statement:

Community Presbyterian Church of Ben Avon aspires to a greater service of God through a ministry mindful of the needs of our congregants, neighbors and, through the Presbyterian Church (USA), the world community.

We actively bind together this community of Jesus Christ through warm fellowship, inspiring worship, nurture, learning and a long, rich tradition.

We are led by the Holy Spirit to use our abundant blessings and diverse talents progressively for evangelism, discipleship, stewardship and mission.

Revelations

Community Presbyterian Church of Ben Avon
7501 Church Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15202

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"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." Revelation 22:21



Community Presbyterian Church of Ben Avon Directory

PastorRev. Dr. Page Creach
Christian Education Director.....Melanie Hughes-Holcomb
Director of Youth & Young Adult MinistriesMike Mullin
Director of Music/Choir DirectorDavid Anderson
Associate Music Director/OrganistBarbara McKelway
Administrative Assistant.....Mary Susan Anderson
Clerk of Session.....Peter Herchenroether
TreasurerRoss Dillon
Trustees, President.....Steve Mellon
Deacons, ChairAndy Deen
Junior Church, Coordinator.....Jan Davis
Wooden Ladder PreschoolLarry Skerlong
Financial Secretaries:Barbara Barcoucky
.....Dwight Chrvala
.....Chuck Hamilton
.....Jim Russell
.....Deb Sadowski
Web Masters.....Susan and Marty Houser

Committee Chairs:

Christian Education Clair Cranville
Fellowship & Evangelism..... Nancy Hamilton
Nominating Committee Jennifer Knuth
Outreach Judy Hay
Property Andy Kolenda
Stewardship & Finance..... Wendy Herchenroether
Worship June Weletz, Steve Mellon

Deacon Comfort and Joy Contacts

(for meal assistance, transportation, grief support, etc.)
Patti Timpani (412-766-1645) or Daryl Johnson (412-766-0895)

Deacons Visitation Ministry

Ed Stauffer (412-761-0704)

(Please help the Deacons share the concern of our community by letting us know whether you, or a friend or family member, would welcome a visit. Requests can be made to any Deacon.)

Church Office Hours are Monday-Friday—9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

† Phone: 412-761-1233; 412-766-1800 † Fax: (412) 766-1801 † E-mail: cpcb@verizon.net † Web site: www.cpcb.com
Chapel is open daily from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm for prayer and meditation.