



The Beacon

Sunnyhills United Methodist Church
355 Dixon Road, Milpitas CA 95035

Pastor Shirley Macemon

Church Office

(408) 262-1486

Visit us on the Web!

www.gbkm-umc.org/sunnyhills

December 2004

Advent and Christmas at Sunnyhills

Sunday Celebrations in Advent

Advent, the time of preparation before Christmas, begins November 28th. Our worship focus for the season of Advent is "Waiting for God."

November 28, Waiting for God: Zechariah, *Luke 1:5-20*

December 5, Waiting for God: Elizabeth, *Luke 1:39-45*

December 12, Waiting for God: Joseph, *Matthew 1:18-25*

December 19, Waiting for God: Mary, *Luke 1:26-38, 46-56*



Christmas Eve Service

Friday, December 24th

Our candlelight service begins at 7:00 p.m. Friends and neighbors, young and old, churched and unchurched are always welcome. Please join us for carols and readings as the old, old story unfolds in new and unexpected ways. May your heart be warmed and your spirit enriched by our journey together. Children are especially invited to participate in worship. Childcare is also available for the very young and/or restless.



Christmas Songs from Around the World

Sunday, December 12th

We gather together at 6:30 p.m. to enjoy old favorites and new discoveries in Christmas songs from all around the globe. Bring your favorite dessert to share and we will have hot chocolate and hot cider. Also, bring your bells, finger cymbals, rattles, and other instruments to join in the music. Be creative! There are lots of different kinds of instruments that make music. Call Gwen Freeman (408/263-8942) with that special Christmas carol.



Pastor's Letter

Last month I asked each of you to think about some questions. Some might think of them as primary questions in the life of a church. Some might think of them as pretty tough questions—even though we assume answers for these in our own lives often enough. Some might think of them (as my kids might say) as “no-brainers” when it comes to a church:



1. Why do people need Christ?
2. Why do people need the church?
3. Why do people need *this particular* church?

Since that time, I've also challenged our Church Council (WRAP) with some questions that cause us to look to the future. It is possible that some of you have been asked the same questions by someone on church council:

What is God calling us to do?
Who is God calling us to be?
What is your dream for Sunnyhills UMC? This year? In five years?

All of this is to get us thinking: Who are we? Where are we headed? How are we the Body of Christ in Milpitas? How are we agents of God's transformative love in our families, our communities, and in the world?

Although the answers to these questions are important in shaping and articulating priorities for the mission and ministry of Sunnyhills United Methodist Church, the process of pondering the questions in community is at least as important, whether or not they ever become a polished document.

Advent starts this week. Advent is that time of preparation for Christmas. Of course, neighbors and stores have had Christmas decorations up since September, and media sources have been pushing Christmas sales for weeks. But the Christian year gives us these weeks of preparation—to think, and ponder, and pray—and to prepare for the coming of Jesus into our hearts and lives again. Do we need Christ differently in our lives than other years? Do we need to be in relationship with our family and community differently than before? Do we need to listen to God in new ways?

I invite you all to come and prepare for Jesus with us, on Sunday mornings, in Tuesday morning prayer group, with any of the Advent activities you find mentioned here in the Beacon, or as we continue our adult study, *Becoming a Thinking Christian*.

Grace and Peace,

Pastor Shirley

DECEMBER

Calendar Notes

Parents' Night Out

*Fridays--December 3rd, 10th, 17th
6:00-8:30 p.m.*

Drop your kids off for a fun- and faith-filled evening with Laine Sazon and Pastor Shirley. See details on page 5.



Community Breakfast

*Sunday, December 5th, 7:00 a.m.
Hosted by Art of Living Milpitas*

Join community leaders and interested citizens at the Sunnyhills Community Breakfast. Everyone is welcome. Art of Living will lead the discussion and provide the scrumptious breakfast. Free (goodwill offering). See details on page 4.

WRAP

(Administrative Council)

*Saturday, December 4th
8:30 a.m.*

Please note earlier time. Held in the Church office this month. Everyone is welcome to help as we craft the program and mission for Sunnyhills UMC.

Neil MacKenzie Memorial Service

*Saturday, December 4th
10:00 a.m. in the
Sanctuary*

Neil MacKenzie, long-time community leader and Sunnyhills neighborhood activist, died November 16, 2004, of colon cancer at the age of 48. The family invites all who knew Neil to attend the memorial service, share a story, and reflect on how their lives were enriched by knowing him.



Christmas Songs

From Around the World

Sunday, December 12th, 6:30 p.m.

Bring your favorite dessert to share. Enjoy old favorites and new discoveries. See details on page 1.

Souper Caroling

Sunday, December 19th, 5:00 p.m.

Join us at Sunnyhills for caroling followed by a delicious soup supper. See details on page 4.

Christmas Eve Service

*Friday, December
24th, 7:00 p.m.*

Candlelight service of carols and readings for all ages. See details on page 1.



**A Very
Happy Birthday!
To**



**Best Wishes for
a Wonderful
Anniversary!**

12/ 5 Kay Twite
12/ 9 Alex Walker
12/11 Juanita Whetstone
12/17 Miles Crawford

12/25 Jack Freeman
12/27 Robert Pease
12/30 Billy Jefferson

12/16 Margaret & Warren
Scott



Community Breakfast A Smile from the Heart

The Art of Living Milpitas cordially invites you to the Milpitas Community Breakfast on Sunday, December 5th, 7:00-8:30 a.m. Enjoy a delicious breakfast and mingle with community leaders and activists.

The Art of Living Foundation is the largest non-governmental volunteer-based organization in the world. The foundation's service projects and programs on yoga, meditation, and stress elimination, have benefited over 20 million people from all walks of life. These programs bring people from varied social, cultural, and religious backgrounds together in a spirit of service and celebration.

In keeping with this spirit, we at the Milpitas chapter regularly offer these programs to the local community and also organized a concert for world peace to bring the community together.

Besides a fresh and delicious breakfast, we will have a talk on body, mind, and spirit, a small meditation, and lots of FUN! . . .

Contact: 408/946-1378

www.artofliving.org

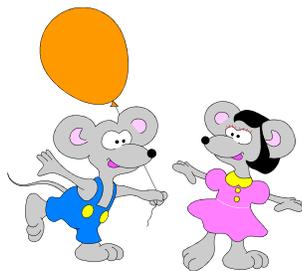
We care for the world. We care for you.

Souper Caroling!

Sunday—December 19th—5:00 p.m.

Join us at Sunnyhills for caroling followed by a delicious soup supper as we share the joy and anticipation of Advent with others. All ages are welcome—we're all amateurs together! We'll tune up our voices, then carpool in the area to sing carols to our older members, shut-ins, and others. We'll end up back at Jones Hall for fellowship and dinner. Help us bring holiday favorites and tuneful Christmas cheer to the neighborhood.





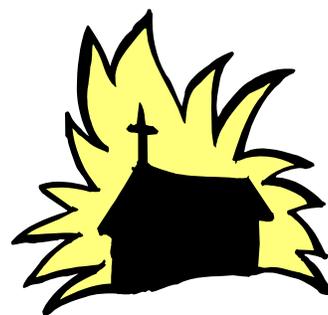
Parents' Night Out (Yeah!)

Friday Evenings—December 3rd, 10th, & 17th
6:00-8:30 p.m.

Bring your children to Sunnyhills UMC to join this fun- and faith-filled evening run by Laine Sazon with Pastor Shirley's assistance. They will have a light dinner, sing songs, participate in a craft project, and play games. Enjoy a peaceful evening (shopping?? decorating?? restaurant?? just relaxing??) and know the children are in good hands.

Consecration Sunday!

Our congregation joyously celebrated Consecration Sunday on November 21. Pastor Shirley and Rev. Greg Bergquist, Executive Pastor of the Los Altos UMC, led worship, and afterwards we feasted on tamales, rice, beans, and chips catered by the Santa Maria Virgen Episcopal Youth Group.



Consecration Sunday is the climax of our month-long emphasis on stewardship, taking seriously our role in caring for God's gifts to us, and how we use those gifts in God's work through the church. The Consecration Sunday program gives us an opportunity to quantify our financial commitment to that work. For some, it has been the first time that we have had an opportunity to articulate our commitment in writing. For some, it has been a challenge to step up to a higher level of giving. Our Sunnyhills community has responded to these challenges and opportunities with generous and open hearts.

On Sunday, seventeen giving units (families, couples, or individuals) completed Estimate of Giving cards. Fifteen of these reflect an increased financial commitment from previous giving. These responses, along with the giving records of those who were not present on Sunday but who have regular giving patterns, represent a committed and expected giving total of \$51,821 in the next twelve months. For comparison, our giving in the last 12 months was \$41,476. To round out the picture, our non-donor income (from rent, etc), is expected to be about \$51,000 in the next twelve months. What does this mean when the Church Council (WRAP) begins to set the 2005 budget? It means that we will have more than \$10,000 more than we did in 2004 in anticipated giving to our operating budget that we can use toward God's work through the church. This is cause for great celebration and thanks to God!

We don't have to wait until January to begin giving at our new commitment levels. God's work isn't bound by the calendar, so our commitment to that work needn't be, either. If you have not had an opportunity to fill out an Estimate of Giving card and would like to, contact Pastor Shirley at the church office.

Thanks go to the Stewardship team who made our Consecration Sunday program possible: Bob Roll, Laine Sazon, Daislyn Pease, Lola Dorsey, Alex Walker, Pastor Shirley and Erik Larsen, chair.

Looking Ahead

WRAP (Administrative Council)

Meets on Saturday, January 15th

Charge Conference

Sunday, January 30th, 11:00 a.m.

Nymphas Edwards, our District Superintendent, will preside over this important business meeting and our election of officers for 2005. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend.



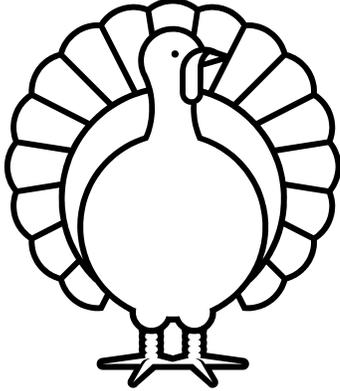
Thank You! Thank You!

It takes many hands to keep our church running. During November, at a particularly inopportune time, our office computer suffered an unrecoverable crash. Alex Walker, our Administrative Assistant, was valiantly able to keep the bulletins and other computer-based activities running by use of his home computer. Upon hearing of the need, Elmer Bungay came forward and proposed to build a new computer for the office—a fast, state of the art, “just what we need” computer—for much less than ANY of the commercial offers available. Elmer delivered the new computer on Consecration Sunday, and it is already in use.

**THANK YOU,
ELMER!**



CRANBERRY SAUCE



Sunnyhills UMC collected and donated **178** cans of cranberry sauce (plus a \$15 gift certificate for a Butterball turkey) to the Milpitas Food Pantry for

Thanksgiving Dinner baskets. The baskets have gone to hungry families in our local area. Many, many thanks to everyone who helped us surpass our goal of 100+ cans!

Religion Influences Relationships



Sociologists have found that religiously involved U.S. families of early adolescents, those ages 12 to 14, are more likely to have significantly stronger family relationships than families that are not religiously active. The findings were released by the National Study of Youth and Religion. Read the full study at www.youthandreligion.org.



Strong and Happy Families

† Spend time together. Happy families invest time in family life. They eat dinner together at least once a week, take holiday vacations together, watch TV together, work on family projects and pray together.

† Live by the golden rule. Family members treat one another with respect and rarely refuse to speak to one another.

† Are connected. Strong families enjoy a wealth of supportive relationships with friends, relatives, neighbors and others outside their family unit. They also belong to a

faith community and attend services weekly.

† Save money. Income has a direct effect on family well-being. Even low income families that manage to save small amounts benefit, as it's a sign of hope for a better future.

† Keep the faith. Strong families are hopeful and optimistic about their future.

*originally printed in The Interpreter
adapted from "5 Secrets of Strong and
Happy Families" by Gini Kopecky Wallace
in Family Circle, Nov. 4, 2003*

The Salvation Army Needs You!



In the past few years, the number of Milpitas-area volunteers for the Christmas bell ringing has decreased, as well as the monies collected for local Salvation Army projects. Ken Bocchini, Volunteer Director of the Salvation Army Service Extension of Milpitas, is assembling a special team of 10-12 people from our community with a heart for serving those less fortunate. The team will meet on a regular basis to brainstorm, discuss, and implement future projects. If you have questions, ideas for helping others, or are interested in becoming part of the special team, please contact Ken at 408/263-1989.

Bell ringers are welcome any day. Please contact Ken and let him know when you are able to participate. He'll be glad to help you ring at your convenience. All monies raised are used locally. Everyone is welcome to ring—enjoy a family outing! SUMC often organizes a day of bell-ringing—check with the church office for more details.