



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.gbgm-umc.org/sunnyhills

December 2005

Welcome the Babe!

Advent and Christmas Schedule

Sunday School Classes

During Advent, Laine Sazon will work with our children at the Sunday School time, focusing on preparation for the Christmas Program. Please help children attend all three Sundays in December so we can all work together!



Scripture Readings

Prepare your heart and mind for God's presence in our midst

November 27th—

First Sunday of Advent:

Isaiah 64:1-9;

Psalms 80:1-7, 17-19;

1 Corinthians 1:3-9;

Mark 13:24-37

Christmas Eve Service

7:00 pm, December 24th

Service of Carols and Candles

Follow the luminaria to join in welcoming the Christ Child and enjoy the contributions of our children.

Christmas Morning Celebration

Come and celebrate Jesus' Birthday!

10:00 am, December 25th

(note later time for our celebration)

Come comfortable, bring your family! Pastor Shirley plans a worshipful celebratory party and a very child-friendly message for us all.

New Year's Day

Worship Service at 9:30 a.m.

Come and help us welcome in 2006!

December 4th—Second Sunday of Advent:

Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13;

2 Peter 3:8-15a; Mark 1:1-8

December 11th—Third Sunday of Advent:

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11; Psalm 126

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24;

John 1:6-8, 19-28

December 18th—Fourth Sunday of Advent

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16; Luke 1:47-55

Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38

December 24th—Christmas Eve

Isaiah 9:2-7, Psalm 96

Titus 2:11-14 Luke 2:1-20

December 25th—Christmas Day

Isaiah 61:10-62:3; Psalm 148

Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:22-40

Pastor's Letter

Dear Friends,

As we enter Advent, there is always a part of me that can't quite figure out what happened to the last several months. How could we possibly be in these last four weeks before Christmas? Of course, the secular world has pulled us toward Christmas for months, urging new decorations, sales, new clothes, electronics, toys, with all the trappings of commercialism. It is easy to buy into the thought that unless we have exactly the right gift for each and every person on our list, our holiday will be somehow less-than-perfect.

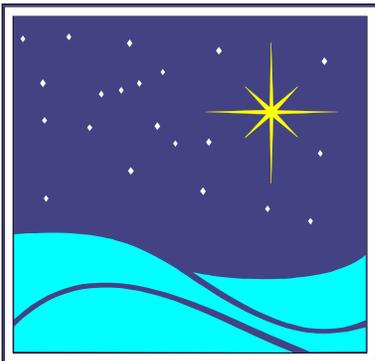


Advent can be an antidote to that commercial pull. Advent can help us put on the brakes, turn from the throne of the shopping mall and prepare our hearts for Christmas.

You should have received a copy of *Whose Birthday is it Anyway?*, a booklet of Advent activities, readings, and meditations. I have found that having a regular time of meditation and prayer during this season is especially helpful in keeping me centered. If you have not received your copy, don't hesitate to call the church office and we'll get one right out to you!

The Gospel lectionary scriptures focus on the theme of preparation, meeting John the Baptist and Mary. I invite you to read the lectionary passages during these weeks of Advent. These passages are listed below. Don't let the commercial holiday get in the way of the real reason we celebrate: Jesus is born. God comes to us as a baby, in a way and with a message we can understand. Praise God!

Grace and Peace,
Pastor Shirley



Advent Bible Readings

November 27th—*Waiting For God*
Isaiah 64:1-9, Mark 13:24-37
December 4th—*Preparing for God*
Isaiah 40: 1-11, Mark 1:1-8
December 11th—*Pointing to God*
Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11; John 6-8, 19-28
December 18th—*Working with God*
Luke 1:47-55; Luke 1: 26-38



Salvation Army Bell Ringing **Saturday 12/10—9:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m.**

SUMC members will ring the bell and collect donations for the Salvation Army on Saturday, December 10th, in front of Big Lots (near Calaveras and Able). Please help us raise money for programs serving needy families and individuals right here in Milpitas.

Sign up on Sunday morning, December 4th, or call Cliveden Chew Haas (408/262-5250) to schedule a convenient time. Children and teens also enjoy helping to ring the bell and wish passers-by a “Merry Christmas”. (Youngsters must be accompanied by an adult.) Bring your family together and select a convenient hour—or several!

Ken Bochini, our Salvation Army contact, thanks everyone for participating last year. It was the best year ever—more new ringers and over \$24,000 collected! That was \$6,000 more than the highest year in the past 20 year. Over \$11,000 went to buy 110 school children K-12 Back to School clothes and backpacks with school supplies, and \$10,000 went to buy food for needy families throughout the year.

We ask you again to answer the call to ring the bells for Christmas. Ken is always looking for extra ringers to help out. Call him at 408/263-1989 any day before Christmas to schedule some spare time helping out a very worthy cause.



Caroling, Caroling, Caroling **Saturday 12/17—4:00-8:00 p.m.**

Come join in the fun! We will gather in the sanctuary at 4:00 p.m. and split into smaller groups to go caroling at the homes of our extended Sunnyhills family, especially the elderly and shut-ins. Our groups will meet at 6:15 p.m. at the Mt. Pleasant Nursing Center on Clayton Road in San Jose where we will sing carols for the patients.

About 7:00 p.m. we will return to Sunnyhills UMC for soup and hot chocolate.

Everyone is included, the young and all the rest of us. Even if you think you can't sing, come and have fun with us. We will let you ring the bells!

Please e-mail or call Gwen Freeman with names and addresses of those who should be included in our caroling destinations. We don't want to miss anyone! (gwenffreeman@yahoo.com or 408/263-8942).

The Origin of Salvation Army Christmas Kettles

The Salvation Army Captain in San Francisco had resolved, in December of 1891, to provide a free Christmas dinner to the area's poor persons. But how would he pay for the food? As he went about his daily tasks, the question stayed in his mind. Suddenly, his thoughts went back to his days as a sailor in Liverpool, England. On the Stage Landing he saw a large pot, called "Simpson's pot" into which charitable donations were thrown by passers-by.

On the next morning, he secured permission from the authorities to place a similar pot at the Oakland ferry landing, at the foot of Market Street. No time was lost in securing the pot and placing it in a conspicuous spot, so that it could be seen by all those going to and from the ferry boats. In addition, a brass urn was placed on a stand in the waiting room for the same purpose.

Thus, Captain Joseph McFee launched a tradition that has spread not only throughout the United States, but also around the world.

By Christmas, 1895, the kettle was used in 30 Salvation Army Corps in various sections of the West Coast area. The Sacramento Bee in that year carried a description of the Army's Christmas activities and mentioned the contributions to street corner kettles. Shortly afterward, two young Salvation Army officers who had been instrumental in the original use of the kettle, William A. McIntyre and N.J. Lewis, were transferred to the East. They took with them the idea of the Christmas Kettle.

In 1897, McIntyre prepared his Christmas plans for Boston around the kettle, but his fellow officers refused to cooperate for fear of "making spectacles of themselves." So McIntyre, his wife and his sister set up three kettles at the Washington Street thoroughfare in the heart of the city. That year the kettle effort in Boston and other locations nationwide resulted in 150,000 Christmas dinners for the needy.

In 1898, the New York World hailed The Salvation Army kettles as "the newest and most novel device for collecting money." The newspaper also observed, "There is a man in charge to see that contributions are not stolen."

In 1901, kettle contributions in New York City provided funds for the first mammoth sit-down dinner in Madison Square Garden, a custom that continued for many years. Today, however, families are given grocery checks or vouchers so that they can buy and prepare their own dinners at home. The homeless poor are still invited to share holiday dinners and festivities at hundreds of Salvation Army Centers.

Kettles now are used in such distant lands as Korea, Japan, Chile and in many European countries. Everywhere, public contributions to the kettles enable The Salvation Army to bring the spirit of Christmas to those who would otherwise be forgotten - to the aged and lonely, the ill, the inmates of jails and other institutions, the poor and unfortunate in the United States. The Salvation Army annually aids more than 3,000,000 persons at Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Kettles have changed since the first utilitarian cauldron set up in San Francisco. Behind it all, though, is the same Salvation Army message, "Sharing Is Caring" and that "Need Knows No Season."





Family Night Out

Celebrate the Christmas Story Together

Wednesday, Thursday, Friday—December 21, 22, 23

5:00-6:30 p.m.

Everyone welcome!—Children, parents, friends, neighbors!

Sing Christmas songs and
retell the Christmas story to children

Light refreshments

Please contact Laine Sazon to help out: 408/934-8788



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During Advent and Christmas, our children will be celebrating the greatest gift of all—the gift of God’s Son, Jesus. The Advent Manger Project is part of that celebration to help them interact with the story of Jesus’ birth and respond in faith, showing love, concern, and thoughtfulness for other persons. As they learn about children and families who live with real need each day and realize that their efforts will make a life-changing difference, our children will experience the joy of participating in God’s work in the world.

Each week the children will be collecting donations to help families and children around the world. Our themes focus on preparation for the birth of Jesus: the manger, hay, blanket, and baby Jesus. Each week the theme is paired with an

Advance Special administered by the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries.

Manger: The Humble Place, Uganda, East Africa, cares for orphans and poor children from all over Uganda. Remembering that Jesus was born in a humble place, children receive healthy care, food, education, love, and the knowledge of Jesus.

Hay: The Goat Project, Nepal, Central Asia, provides goats for destitute families, giving hope, nutrition, and work. Each family that receives a goat tithes to the church with the income created by the goat.

Blanket: UMCOR, Disaster Response in the U.S. offers blankets, tents, and other emergency assistance to persons displaced from their homes by flood, fire, or other disasters, saving lives and affirming the worth of all God’s children.

Baby Jesus: The John Wesley School for Persons With Disabling Conditions, Santiago, Chile, provides treatment and education for children and youth who are mentally or physically challenged.

**A Very
Happy Birthday!
To**



**Best Wishes for
a Wonderful
Anniversary!**

12/11 Juanita Whetstone
12/17 Miles Crawford
12/22 Malacha Martin
12/25 Jack Freeman
12/25 Mark Pereyra
12/27 Robert Pease

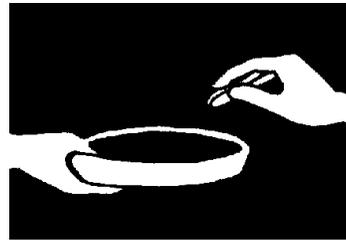
12/30 Bill Jefferson
12/31 Helen Phan
12/31 Huy Phan

12/16 Margaret & Warren
Scott

Income and Expenses October 2005

INCOME

Offerings	\$ 5,897
Building Use, etc.	4,529
Special Giving	704
TOTAL	\$11,131



EXPENSES

Mission & Outreach	\$1,249
Operating Expenses	2,839
Pastor & Staff	4,139
TOTAL	\$8,227

Fund Balances

Cash on hand	\$50,265
Designated funds	\$40,898
Cash Available	\$ 9,366



Thank You!

Many, many thanks to everyone who helped collect Jello for the Milpitas Food Pantry! We gave 123 boxes of Jello plus a gift certificate for a turkey to help them fill their 300+ baskets for needy families in our area.

God does not value us (churches) for how large we are or how small we are but for how willing we are to use God's gifts for his greater glory.

District Superintendent Nymphas Edwards



Christmas Countdown

When does the holiday season really start?

If retail promotions are any indication, Christmas begins as soon as the last bags of Halloween candy have been moved to the bargain bins. Our Christian ancestors, however, had other ideas.

The first church official to propose special activities for the pre-Christmas period was Perpetuus, bishop of Tours, in 490. To help his flock prepare for the holiday, he advocated fasting every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from Martinmas (November 11) to Christmas Eve. This practice, which mirrored Lent, spread slowly throughout France, Spain, and Germany. Then it crashed into Rome.

Roman attention to the Advent season trailed Perpetuus by about 100 years, and it took a radically different tone. While much of Western Europe, and at least portions of the Christian East, fasted, Roman Christians celebrated. Perhaps it seemed odd to them to approach Christ's birth as somberly as they did his death. By the eleventh century, though, Rome had come around, and Advent meant no feasts, no recreational travel, no marital relations, and no weddings. (These prohibitions were dropped in recent centuries.)

Sometime in all of this, the start date for Western Advent slid back two weeks, to the Sunday closest to St. Andrew's Day (November 30). As a result, Advent can last anywhere from 22 to 28 days, though for the sake of year-to-year consistency, Advent calendars start with December 1. Yet not everyone kicks off the Christmas season at the same time or in the same way.

In the Orthodox church, Advent still includes fasting, and in most places it lasts from November 15 to December 24. The Armenian Orthodox church is an exception; its members fast for three of the seven weeks between November 15 (St. Philip's Day) and January 6 (Epiphany).

St. Barbara's Day, December 4, signals the beginning of the Christmas season in Syria, Lebanon, and parts of France and Germany. Some Middle Eastern customs for the day resemble American Halloween—children dress up in frightening costumes and go door-to-door collecting candy and other small gifts. This activity has no relationship to the story of St. Barbara, which states that her father locked her in a tower, killed her for her Christian faith, and was then struck by lightning. Not that it matters; historians now doubt that St. Barbara even existed.

St. Nicholas's Day, December 6, inaugurates the Christmas festivities in Austria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, the Netherlands, and parts of Germany. On the night of December 5, St. Nicholas—accompanied, oddly enough, by a little demon—brings gifts for good children, who set out shoes or stockings for him to fill. The Dutch make the biggest production of Nick's arrival, gathering to watch his ship land in Amsterdam, then seeing him off on his flying, white horse. Obviously, a lot of this pageantry crossed over to America, except that our St. Nicholas arrives via the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and doesn't deliver his gifts until December 24.

Swedes wait until St. Lucy's Day, December 13, to commence Christmas observances. Lucy, who supposedly died in Italy in 304, became a Scandinavian favorite when that region converted to Christianity, beginning in about the eleventh century. Lucy's name comes from the Latin word for "light," but, before sixteenth-century calendar reforms, her feast day fell on December 21—the shortest day of the year. Scandinavians were pretty desperate for light around that time, so they latched onto Lucy. Her annual remembrance involves a girl from each household wearing a wreath of lingonberry leaves and lit candles on her head and making an early breakfast for the family.

Strange or silly as some of these customs might seem, I'd rather have my calendar structured around cultural traditions than around corporate budget forecasts. I don't care how much retailers are worried about fourth-quarter earnings. If they play Christmas music before Thanksgiving, they won't get my money.

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Proclaiming the **Whole** Gospel

*A Gathering for
Progressive
United Methodists*



January 13-14, 2006
Campbell United
Methodist Church

Presented by:

The Calif.-Nev. Annual Conference Committee on Reconciliation
The Calif.-Nev. Annual Conference Board of Church and Society
The California-Nevada Methodist Federation for Social Action
The California-Nevada Reconciling Ministries Clergy

Registration Fee \$35
If you are unable to afford the \$35, enclose whatever you can pay. Optional Friday dinner is \$12 per person additional. Send your registration to: John Davenport, Registrar, 1138 Meridian Circle, Santa Rosa, CA 95401

Save the date!!! Don't miss this rare opportunity to worship with, learn from, and interact with national leaders at a convocation right here in our own back yard. **Proclaiming the WHOLE Gospel** focuses on the Christian responsibility to consider all Christ's message, not just our favorite snippets. Speakers will move us, teach us, enlighten us, and help us link our faith to our lives in an all-too-damaged world.

The schedule includes dinner on Friday, January 13th, prepared by the Campbell church youth group to support Sierra Service Project and a Celebration of Reconciling Ministries with **Jim and Jean Strathdee** leading worship. Saturday, January 14th starts with a continental breakfast, followed by speakers, breakout groups over lunch talking with the speakers and others representing social justice issues, and adjournment in late afternoon.

Powerful speakers and leaders from across the U.S. include **Gilbert Caldwell**, a retired United Methodist Minister who participated in the Mississippi Freedom Summer of 1964, the Selma to Montgomery March in 1965, and the March on Washington. Rev. Caldwell is a founding member of Black Methodists for Church Renewal. Dr. **Janet Wolf**, Southeastern Jurisdictional coordinator for the United Methodist Reconciling Ministries Clergy, is one of America's most dynamic preachers. **Troy G. Plummer**, Executive Director of the Reconciling Ministries Network, has traveled coast to coast organizing and bringing an inclusive Gospel message for all God's children. **Jimmy Creech**, recently chaired Soulforce, Inc., an interreligious movement using the principles of nonviolent resistance taught and practiced by Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., to confront the spiritual violence perpetrated against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons by too many religious institutions. **Mike Farrel** of Hollywood, California, has been a long-time champion of human rights throughout the world, serving as Co-Chair of the Human Rights Watch in California. Dr. **Karen Oliveto** is an Associate Dean at Pacific School of Religion and has been prominent in the effort to open the doors of the United Methodist Church to all persons, including gays and lesbians and their families.