



The Clarendon Connection

December 2008

www.clarendonhillchurch.org

Watch for the Light of Christ This Advent

by Liz Leavitt

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. John 1:1-5

Sunday, November 30 is the first Sunday of the four week season of Advent. Advent is technically the beginning of the Christian liturgical year, and it is a season of both preparation and anticipation. For four weeks, we gather in worship to prepare our hearts, minds, and souls for the coming of the Christ. During a time of year when days become shorter and light becomes scarce, we wait in the darkness for the coming of the light. We use song, silence, prayer and preaching to anticipate the coming of that light into the world. The color of Advent is purple, a symbol of the royalty about to be born in Bethlehem.

In order to help us mark this important season, a few changes will be made in our regular worship together. Some musical additions and adornments in our sanctuary will help us usher in the coming season. We hope these additions will help our community prepare its heart and soul for the coming joy of Christmas, as we walk together from the darkness into the light.



Christmas Gifts for Families from Somerville Early Head Start

This year we will once again be helping families from Somerville Early Head Start. On December 7th, in the back of the sanctuary (on the table by the door), there will be a Christmas tree with tags attached to it. Please choose as many tags as you like. These families are asking for the bare necessities needed to make it through a New England winter. One family is a single mother with a ten-year-old son and a two-year-old daughter. The other family has a mother, father, grandmother and three children: a four-year-old boy, six-year-old boy and one-year-old girl.

The gifts do not need to be wrapped, but they must be NEW. Gift cards would also be welcome, either for the items listed, or for local grocery stores. Please return your gifts no later than Sunday, Dec. 21st. Please be sure to attach the tag to the item so that we know who it is for. If you have questions, contact Ellen, ellends@verizon.net. Thank you!



News from Shelley Rhodes (and Lady Guinevere)

Oh, it is great to hear from you! Let the crew at CHPC know that Shelley and Guinevere are doing good, though wondering what we thought was so much fun about lake effect snow, we are up to 52 inches this year so far.

And it is only November. Sigh.

Guinevere is growing up by leaps and bounds mentally, she has settled down quite a bit, is not snacking on everything in sight, well almost not everything in sight, and is much better around other dogs. She is also developing a real love of carrots. She is however still raiding trash cans for treasures, and I have a feeling that one is going to take a long time to cure, smile. Beyond that she is a spectacular guide and a great little worker.

I am four months into my job, and really loving it. I have 93 people on my case load and cover 4 and a half counties, which may mean I might travel three hours to see a customer. But it is rewarding as well going to see people in the community and provide materials and ideas for them so they can continue to do what they need to do to be independent. My oldest is 97 and my youngest is 3.

Smile, it is a lot of traveling, and a lot of paperwork (what Government job isn't?) but I love it, especially when I can provide ways for people to work again.

I am active in my home church here in Corry, the First Presbyterian Church of Corry, which will be celebrating 145 years next March. We are trying to read the entire New Testament to get ready for the celebrations. I am still knitting along, and am making prayer shawls, scarves and did an afghan for my cousin's wedding. Our Presbytery hasn't made the decision on gay rights yet, I am of course for it, but I don't know about the rest of my church. I know it is a decision that will have to be settled once and for all at some point in the favor of it, but the battle keeps raging. Judson is doing well. He is really happy that winter is here, as he loves the cold. This dog you couldn't get him to move in the summer time, but now it takes a lot for us to call him in if he is out playing in the snow. He loves to make dog angels, and plow the snow with his nose, leap and bound with glee from snowbank to snow drift. He loves to get out when I can take him places so he can get petted and loved. We are working on getting him certified as a therapy dog, so I can take him up to the nursing facilities in Erie. Beyond that he and Guinnie have settled down for the most part. Guinevere is the dominant one of our three dogs, though Shadow our pet dog would debate that on occasion. Smile.

My mom is doing great, she is my driver, so we spend a lot of time together, smile. Am looking for other drivers so to take the strain off of her, smile. My younger brother is working at Walmart, and enjoying it. My dad is still a bus driver and loves it, he also is doing a lot of Community based instruction trips during the day with the local high school's life skills class and loving it. Dan and Gina are both happy living in Lowell, and Dan is out of the navy, he is actually working at Sams Club as a fresh meals preparation cook. Is temporary as he gets other things figured out. Roslyn is now five, and Vivian is now one. Smile.

Thanksgiving will be here at home, with just the four of us. Most of our relatives are too far away to really enjoy a Thanksgiving together. I do have that day and Friday off which I am looking forward to. I am still looking for a great apartment, smile... taking my time on it, so crashing at my parents home right now. Which is o.k. smile. But I miss all of you, and think about you often. I have been listening to the pod casts when I can and appreciate getting the newsletter each month.

Smile. Cell phone is still the same number and will be for the far future, 814-323-3533. but it is great hearing from all of you.

Do tell Karl I am thinking of them! And am planning some day a trip back to Boston. When ahem I have enough vacation, smile.

Smile.

Shelley L. Rhodes, M.A., VRT

And Guinevere: Golden Lady Guide Dog

guidinggolden@gmail.com

**'The December Salon'
An Affordable Art Sale**

Exhibit dates: 4-7 December; 11-14 December

Featuring the work of over 50 artists, proceeds from the December Salon benefit the Nave Gallery's Guest Curator Program. This annual exhibit provides a unique opportunity to add to or start your own art collection while supporting one of Somerville's most innovative art spaces.



4 December 2008

6 - 8 p.m., Opening reception, 'The December Salon' with Milo Jones, FREE

www.myspace.com/mistermilojones

Part folk, part country, a little punk, and all eccentric, singer/songwriter Milo Jones has been compared to the likes of Lee Hazlewood, Leonard Cohen, Tom Waits, and even Dracula. Romantic, weird, and haunting, Milo's lyrics, voice and style thrill you and stay with you long after.



5 December 2008

6 - 8 p.m., 'The December Salon' at The Nave

7:30 p.m., Allison Crowe's Tidings Concert, \$10

www.allisoncrowe.com

ARTSomerville Presents Tidings - Allison Crowe's special holiday concert - as a fundraiser for the EveryDay Angels Foundation's Project Warmth. Come Winter, EDAF volunteers deliver warm clothes and blankets to the homeless. In other seasons, they clean up beaches, and perform a range of community service including partnering with Heifer International. Tidings stirs together traditional Christmas carols and holiday favourites with an organic blend of rock, jazz, folk, gospel and soul. "Be prepared to be amazed," chimes ChristmasReviews.com. "Allison Crowe is a stunningly talented performer."



6 December 2008

2 - 4 p.m., 'The December Salon' with John O'Hara, FREE

www.myspace.com/johnohara

Singer/songwriter John O'Hara's musical career began with the Sorry Jar, playing at the Middle East upstairs and CB's Gallery in NYC, among others. He's performed solo at the Somerville lounges—Abbey or P.A.'s—and is s-l-o-o-w-l-y recording an album. Writing songs about laundry, autumn, and falling in love with mice, Somerville has become his home.

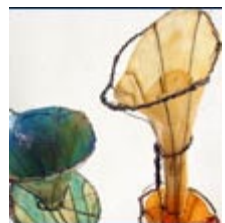


7 December 2008

2 - 4 p.m., 'The December Salon' with Audrey Ryan, FREE

www.myspace.com/audreyryan

Maine native Audrey Ryan performs solo shows with instruments that include an electric Japanese axe, a vintage Gibson acoustic, a retro 80's era Casio keyboard, and of course, an accordion. Surrounded by a cacophony of musical influences from an early age, this talented musician was inspired to begin playing guitar at the ten and experimented with different genres throughout college. After graduating, Ryan started a band and has been performing and touring ever since.



11 December 2008

6 - 8 p.m., 'The December Salon' at the Nave, FREE

12 December 2008

6 - 8 p.m., 'The December Salon' at the Nave, FREE



13 December 2008

2-4 p.m. & 6-8 p.m. 'The December Salon' with The West Somerville Illuminations Caroling Tour, FREE

www.somervilleartscouncil.org

Westward Ho ho ho! SAC and ARTSomerville are teaming up to offer a West Somerville Illuminations Walking & Caroling Tour. Tour-goers will walk past some of the snazziest West Somerville holiday light displays, including the showstopper created by Al Pellechia on Wallace St. Singing will be lead by Alex the Jester and the Somerville Community Chorus. We will end our perambulations at the Nave Gallery where we will feast on art and holiday refreshments. Meet at 6 p.m. in Davis Square, in Front of J.P. Licks (4A College Ave.). The tour will take about an hour and will end at the Nave.

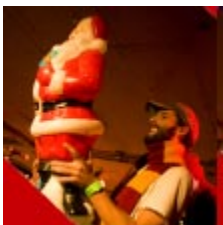


14 December 2008

2 - 4 p.m., Closing reception, 'The December Salon' with The Milling Gowns, FREE

www.themillinggowns.com

The Milling Gowns showcases the original songs of baritone singer M. backed by darkly elegant piano and viola, punctuated with drums and bass. Their "gloom pop" sound ranges from upbeat with subliminal sadness to slow textured laments.



20 December 2008

7 - 9 p.m., Good Cheer Festival at The Nave, FREE

Just in time for Christmas, the Good Cheer Festival arrives in Somerville! Last year's event was so fun and festive, featuring dramatic readings of *The Night Before Christmas* and Dr. Seuss's *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, a piano-led group carol sing and awesome refreshments. This year is going to be even merrier! This is an awesome event for the whole family, that will totally get you ready—and excited!—for the

holidays! Cookies and eggnog will be available! Note: Christmas sweaters are heavily encouraged. Please dress the part, and come ready to sing!

To volunteer to help with an event, contact Randy at rwinchester@artsomerville.org.

Local Agencies Awarded

The Session, on behalf of the congregation, and with input from Peace, Justice and Mission Committee, has recently awarded local mission money to two agencies.

Earlier in the year, we gave \$500 to RESPOND at the time of our April interfaith fundraiser concert. We have now given \$500 each to Somerville Early Head Start (member Salam Lebbos works there) and Teen Empowerment (which used to rent a space in our building). Both of these agencies are working closely with children/youth and their families to make Somerville a better community for all residents.

In addition to the \$500 grant, funds from two offerings have been awarded to these agencies. Forty percent of the Pentecost offering, taken last spring, stays with our congregation – we are asked to use it to help children who are at risk. Somerville Early Head Start will receive our percentage of those funds. Twenty-five percent of the Peacemaking offering, which was taken in October, is to be used by the local congregation toward peacemaking efforts. Teen Empowerment has received our percentage of those funds.

The Session thanks you for your generosity, and we are always seeking your input and information about local agencies that do good work in the Somerville community.

God and Caesar

The following is adapted from the pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church in Auburn, N.Y. and appeared in the church's November 2008 newsletter.

"Give to the Emperor the things that are the Emperor's," said Jesus, "and to God the things that are God's." Or as some of us remember it from the King James Version: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." (Matthew 22: 21)

Those who were in church on October 19 heard me say (if they were paying attention) that this is a great text to use for a stewardship sermon, which I have done many times. However, on that Sunday I chose to speak instead on the subject of how our faith informs our politics.

But this is the time of year when the church asks its members for pledges for the following year, and so once again it might be good to consider Jesus's words in that context.

As I pointed out in the sermon that Sunday, this well-known quote from Jesus was prompted by a trick question posed to Jesus. His enemies wanted to force him into taking a position on a volatile issue that would either make him unpopular with some people or would get him into trouble with the Roman authorities. "Is it lawful to pay taxes to the Emperor or not?" they asked.

Jesus asked them for a coin, and they produced one. Then Jesus asked whose image was on the coin. They said it was Caesar's image. And then Jesus made his well-known statement about giving to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.

One of the important words in the text is that word "image." It is the same word used in the creation story when it says that God made humans in God's image.

Jesus knew that his Jewish audience would make that connection. Let Caesar have his coin, he says in effect. But you, made in the image of God, belong to God.

This is the basic principle of stewardship – that we as human beings (and all that we possess) belong to God. We are stewards, managers, of what God has entrusted to us.

...As our own personal expenses have gone up, so too have those of the church.

As you consider how much you can pledge for next year I hope you will remember not only this text about giving to God what belongs to God, but also another one of my favorites: "Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:7)

Together we can accomplish great things as we continue to give cheerfully to God what belongs to God—ourselves and a portion of our resources.

Give. Now.

Is this really a time for generosity? More than ever.

The November 9th Sunday *Boston Globe* magazine featured stories about giving: giving money, giving time, giving help to others. Among the larger stories were vignettes from individuals about "My Gift." One that caught my eye was a Somerville cab driver whose sister was tortured and murdered by her boyfriend three years ago. He now gives free cab rides through his company (via RESPOND and other agencies) to victims of domestic violence. They are taken wherever they need to go – emergency shelters, hospitals, police stations, courts – with no questions asked.

This vignette moved me very much: a 49-year-old Worcester woman, Lydia Labreque, gave \$1 to the Worcester Fellowship, a group that assists the homeless and holds a weekly service for them on Worcester Common.

"I gave all my nickels to the church collection today. My boyfriend, Dave, and I live on the street. We made \$19.45 today collecting bottles and cans, which is really good. I donate a dollar every week, more or less, depending on what I can afford. I do it because I can. What you do on the street comes back to you, and I hope that when I need the help one day someone will give it to me. Being on the street these last two years has taught me a lot about giving. People give us cans all the time, and someone just gave Dave two pairs of pants and a belt. Coming to this outdoor church also gives me a lot. It brings relief and peace to the rest of my day."

You will receive a stewardship letter for our church in the next few weeks. Please prayerfully consider an increase in your pledge. The church needs all the time, talent and financial support that you can share.

Lectionary Readings

December 2008

December 7 (2nd Sunday of Advent)

Isaiah 40:1-11
 Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13
 2 Peter 3:8-15a
 Mark 1:1-8

December 14 (3rd Sunday of Advent)

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11
 Psalm 126:1-6 or Luke 1:47-55
 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24
 John 1:6-8, 19-28

December 21 (4th Sunday of Advent)

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16
 Luke 1:47-55 or Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26
 Romans 16:25-27
 Luke 1:26-38

December 24 (Christmas Eve)

Isaiah 9:2-7
 Psalm 96:1-13
 Titus 2:11-14
 Luke 2:1-14 (15-20)



December 25 (Christmas Day)

At Dawn:
 Isaiah 62:6-12
 Psalm 97:1-12
 Titus 3:4-7
 Luke 2:(1-7) 8-20
 Christmas Day:
 Isaiah 52:7-10
 Psalm 98:1-9
 Hebrews 1:1-4 (5-12)
 John 1:1-14

December 28

Isaiah 61:10-62:3
 Psalm 148:1-14
 Galatians 4:4-7
 Luke 2:22-40

January 2009

January 4

Jeremiah 31:7-14
 Psalm 147:12-20
 Ephesians 1:3-14
 John 1:(1-9) 10-18

January 6 (Epiphany)

Isaiah 60:1-6
 Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14
 Ephesians 3:1-12
 Matthew 2:1-12

January 11

Genesis 1:1-5
 Psalm 29:1-11
 Acts 19:1-7
 Mark 1:4-11

January 18

1 Samuel 3:1-10 (11-20)
 Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18
 1 Corinthians 6:12-20
 John 1:43-51

January 25

Jonah 3:1-5, 10
 Psalm 62:5-12
 1 Corinthians 7:29-31
 Mark 1:14-20

Church Assignments

	scripture	focus on mission	coffee hour	nursery
Dec. 7	J. Bray	M. Reynolds	Camelio/Braga	K. Gustafson
Dec. 14	H. Rantisi	P. Beran	Reynolds/Graf	V. Donovan
Dec. 21	R. Liberace	J. Auger	Newquist/Glass	E. Schemerhorn
Dec. 28	K. Graf	J. Bray	Chapman-Adisho	N. Jirmanus
Jan. 4	A. Kwaa	S. Lebbos	Siggers	K. Gustafson
Jan. 11	E. Schemerhorn	R. Liberace	Gustafson/Cavano	V. Donovan
Jan. 18	P. Auger	K. Graf	Donovan	E. Schemerhorn
Jan. 25	L. Cavano	T. Siggers	Schemerhorn	N. Jirmanus

If you would like to be added to the rotation for any of these ministry opportunities, please contact Ann Crews Melton, editor@clarendonhillchurch.org or 617.646.9690.

The Clarendon Connection is edited by Ann Crews Melton. Articles for the January issue are requested by Dec. 27. Email editor@clarendonhillchurch.org with news, photos, tidbits, corrections or suggestions.



155 Powder House Blvd.
West Somerville, MA 02144-1613
tel: 617-625-4823
www.clarendonhillchurch.org

Rev. Karl Gustafson, Minister Augustus Kwaa, Parish Associate/Evangelist John Adams, Music Director Arnie James, Sexton

Christmas Joy Offering

A Presbyterian tradition for almost seventy years, the Christmas Joy Offering is one of the four special offerings designated by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to provide congregations direct ways of supporting specific causes that help those in need.

Fifty percent of the receipts to the Christmas Joy Offering are distributed to the Board of Pensions (www.pensions.org) for assistance programs that provide support to retired and active church workers and their spouses and families. The other fifty percent supports Presbyterian-related racial ethnic education (www.pcusa.org/resc) through the General Assembly Council.

During the month of December, our mission focus will be the Christmas Joy offering. You will be hearing (and reading) about how your offering is working to help students at Presbyterian-related racial ethnic schools and supporting retired and active church workers and their families.

Coin boxes to collect change for the offering are on the table in the church foyer. Pick one up and put your spare change in it during the next month. Every little bit helps, and you will be surprised by how much you can collect! Bring your coin boxes and other offerings to church on Sunday, December 21st, when we will collect the Christmas Joy offering.

