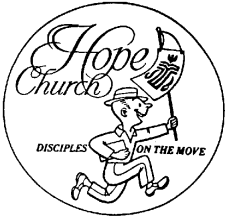


HOPE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
TINTON FALLS, NEW JERSEY



NOTES OF HOPE



A monthly publication to keep us informed.

December 2007

Edited by
Erica Andresen
Published by
Steven Buckley

Our Mission Statement

We believe that God has gathered this congregation and staff at this time and place in order to:

Introduce people to the enduring love of Jesus found in the Gospel of Jesus Christ

Invite them to become part of the family of God

Instruct them in the scriptures, God's word to us

Involve them in the ministry of the church, according to their gifts

Inspire them to go into the world, making disciples of others

THE PASTOR'S COLUMN

Dear Family and Friends of Hope Church,

This Sunday marks the beginning of the Advent season in the Church Year. For those of you who may have never heard, Advent is a season of preparation. The first Sunday in Advent signifies the beginning of what is known as the Christian year – the various seasons we observe, as Advent, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost, that mark out a Christian's journey through the life of Jesus Christ on earth and in heaven. These days of Advent, leading up to Christmas Day, are days of preparation and expectation.

The word 'advent' is Latin for 'a coming or arrival'. The idea behind it is that God came to earth and lived among us (which, if you stop and think about it, is a really big deal). It's something to celebrate, rejoice, because just by being in it, God was giving the greatest blessing to the created world.

Yet this birth led to the death of this same God, by us on behalf of us, and then the greatest news that death will not end it all. So it's not something you just go rushing into. We need to take stock of what that baby Jesus was here for.

God loves and wants to share that love with this broken and hurting world. So, to heal this broken world, so full of sin and defined by death, God chose to come here and walk the earth... to grow up... to live the truth... and ultimately to die. To do this, God had to start out as a baby, and the only way to be a baby is to be born. Hence Christmas.

But Advent is not just about the birth of the baby Jesus. Yes, by celebrating Advent we are thanking God for Christ's first coming. But we are also preparing for his final coming at the end of time, AND we are celebrating Christ's presence among us today through the Spirit. Thus, these are days defined by Hope, Peace, Love, and Joy.

In the end, Advent functions as both a reminder, and a calibration of the great mystery that has been proclaimed by the Church since its very beginning: "Christ was born. Christ has risen. Christ will come again."

In this season of Advent, may Christ's Grace and Peace be with you.

Pastor Andrew

Stewardship

THANK YOU FROM THE STEWARDSHIP & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Thank you everyone for making our Pasta Dinner & Silent Auction on November 3rd a blessed success. God is so good and He brought us together to celebrate his love. Through all your support and generosity we were able to raise \$4,412.00 which goes into our Operational account for church expenses. Praise the Lord and thank you!

Nancy Oliviero, Chair

New Fundraiser For our church

What is SCRIP? The SCRIP program is our latest fundraiser to help raise funds for our Operational account. The Stewardship and Finance Committee is asking that we all prayerfully consider using this program to purchase gift cards that you would ordinarily buy at stores so that Hope benefits.

This program is simple and easy to use. By purchasing gift cards at face value, a percentage of the cost is donated by the vendor from which you are purchasing the gift card. This is money that you would already spend if you went to a department or food store to purchase a gift card for someone. There are many vendors to choose from. A complete list is located on the web at www.glscrip.com. If you do not have access to a computer, a list can be provided for you. Each week we will have a table in the narthex where you can get information about this program. Please see Judy McGuire if you require a complete list and to place your order. The first batch will be ordered December 2. Please have your orders to Judy in by then. This will be an on going fundraiser throughout the year for Hope.

P.S. Wal-Mart has been added to the list. If you are shopping for the Christmas giving tree you can buy items at K-mart or Shoprite with the gift cards.

Stewardship Prayer

Almighty and ever-faithful Lord,
gratefully acknowledging Your mercy
and humbly admitting our need,
we pledge our trust in You and each other.

Filled with desire,
we respond to Your call for discipleship
by shaping our lives in imitation of Christ.
We profess that the call requires us
to be stewards of Your gifts.
As stewards, we receive Your gifts gratefully,
cherish and tend them in a responsible manner,
share them in practice and love with others,
and return them with increase to the Lord.

We pledge to our ongoing formation as stewards
and our responsibility to call others to that same endeavor.

Almighty and ever-faithful God,
it is our fervent hope and prayer
that You who have begun this good work in us
will bring it to fulfillment in [Jesus](#) Christ,
our Lord. Amen

Worship And Spiritual Life

We're excitedly looking forward to the Advent and Christmas seasons here at Hope, with 2 December being the first Sunday in Advent. ***Help us celebrate the season!***

As we begin the new church year during the Advent season, there will be a number of small changes in our worship service. To start, music will be played for an extended period prior to our worship service. We encourage you to spend this time in quiet reflection and prayer. We hope the forthcoming changes will enhance your worship experience, and we are looking forward to your feedback.

You're invited to help us beautify the sanctuary again this year by dedicating or honoring someone with a Poinsettia! Ordering forms are available each week in the Sunday bulletin and may be returned, together with your check for payment made out to Hope Presbyterian Church, to Carol Jean Turk or Karen Schwartz.

We will again have an Advent book this year, but with a new format. Be sure to look for your copy to share as a family and learn more about this time of expectation, anticipation, and hope as we move toward the celebration of Christ's birth. ***Give a copy to a friend and invite them to share in the season here at Hope Church.***

The Advent season prepares us for Christ's birth. Christmas Eve will be celebrated with two candlelight services this year, a family-oriented service at 7:00 p.m. featuring many of our church musical groups, and a more reflective service at 11:00 p.m. with a presentation by the Hope Players. We invite you to bring your family and friends to celebrate Christ at one or both of our services.

“How God Came to Us”

Circle Sun., Dec. 16 on your calendars for our intergenerational Christmas Pageant, “How God Came to Us”. Be in your seats by 6:00 for this, joyful, energy-filled presentation of the traditional Nativity Story - with a modern flavor. Rebecca Harris Flynn is directing a stellar cast of familiar Hope faces: Andrew Tibert, Adam Hayek, Rachel Hayek, Dave Harris, Jonathan Lisle, Megan Tursi, Tim Brown, Nathaniel Brown, Chazz Carson, Conor Mullan... and the Church School students' chorus. Please join us for the presentation, as we sing favorite carols together, and celebrate the true meaning of Christmas in this special congregational event. Friends and relatives are welcome to attend. And that's not all! The Deacons are providing a dessert buffet after the performance.

Church School News

Church School students have been busy rehearsing for “How God Came to Us,” practicing carols and learning their chorus chants on Sunday mornings, in addition to continuing on with our lessons. Recently we have been learning about Moses and will complete this unit with the story of Joshua. On Dec. 2, we will begin our Advent lessons.

Offering from November and December is being dedicated to a Samaritan’s Purse project. Based on the amount collected, students will vote on a project to support. See our poster in the Church School area with some of our choices.

No Church School on Dec. 30. Nursery care will be provided.

Bible 101

For the last 8 weeks a group of Hope congregants have met on Sunday evenings to explore the Bible. The Bible 101 class, led by Pastor Tibert and Marilyn Hicken, offered participants religious education, historical perspective of the Bible, and fellowship.

The religious education provided in Bible 101 followed the format of the book *30 Days to Understanding the Bible*, by Max Alder, D.Min. Dr Alder’s format allowed laymen to understand the structure of the Bibles’ books, Psalms and Epistles. Most important, students learned how the Bible chronicles the highs and lows of God’s relationship with man from the Creation through the prophecies documented in Revelation.

Throughout the course, Pastor Tibert and Marilyn explained the historical context of events studied in the guidebook and the Bible. Through their expert explanations, attendees were able to gain an understanding of “where” and “when” the key figures of the Bible lived, traveled, and spread the message of God. These examinations of the history and geography surrounding the many stories we knew from the Bible added great interest and comfort to those of us who were admittedly challenged by geography.

As important as the religious and historical perspectives was the fellowship of the attendees of Bible 101! The low-key setting and pace of the program provided a supportive climate for all participants to ask questions and air opinions with the group. Many participants offered their unique insight to the lessons in ways that helped everyone understand God’s messages. The old adage “none of us is as smart as all of us” applied to the group’s learning.

Bible 101 concluded the final Sunday in November and certainly, the participants are already looking forward to future programs. Many thanks to Andrew, Marilyn and all the program’s attendees!

From the Deacons

The Deacons extend thanks to our wonderful congregation for your generous response to the food items on the 'Giving Tree'. All the items were taken from the tree in the first two weeks that the tree was on display, and with the help of our friends from Ilex on Industrial Way, we were able to provide a Thanksgiving blessing to 11 families!!

Just to let you know how special you all are, here is a recent compliment that came our way. Five of the families that we support came to our attention through the Christian organization, Love INC (Love In The Name of Christ). This fall we received correspondence from them about a program they sponsor, CONNECT, which was requesting our church to provide gifts for one elderly person or for one family at Christmas. The letter was asking if we would participate. The Deacon representative called them to let them know that we continue with the families they have introduced to us for the whole year, meals at Thanksgiving, Easter, the 4th of July, and gifts for each family and for those with children, 2 gifts per child at Christmas. The coordinator of the program was stunned. She said that most of the other churches that participate provide for Thanksgiving and that's all. She was elated and thankful that we provide for our families all year long.

Now, friends, the 'Giving Tree' is on display again so that we might provide gifts (\$20. per gift) for our families. Please take an ornament, purchase the item, wrap it and return it with the ornament attached on December 23. Your generosity and love is very much appreciated. Bless you all.

Hope Church 2007 Christmas Card Display

Again this Christmas season the Deacons are asking members and friends of Hope Church to bring a Christmas card to the church to be displayed in the narthex for the holiday season. This will be done in lieu of our sending Christmas cards to others in the Hope Church community this year. Please bring your card to the church anytime between December 2nd and December 23rd.

The Deacons will then accept donations associated with Christmas card and postage savings, and these donations will be presented to Love INC. Your donation can be placed in the offering plate, and checks should be payable to Hope Church with a notation of "Love INC". Thanks in advance for your participation and support of Love INC during the holiday season.