

# THE STONE NEWS

STONE CHURCH OF WILLOW GLEN, PRESBYTERIAN USA    DECEMBER 2006



## Rehearsing for Archangel Gabriel's Awesome Adventure! (see page 2)



### Marge's Column

#### Advent is a Time of Prayer and Preparation

Dear Friends,

On Dec. 3, the Season of Advent begins. Although the dates change from year to year, Advent starts on the Sunday nearest Nov. 30 and includes the four Sundays before Christmas Day. The season can range from 23 to 28 days, depending on the day Christmas Eve falls. Advent signifies the beginning of the new Church Year and a change in the Lectionary readings ~ this year we will move from the Gospel of Mark to the Gospel of Luke.

The word *advent* means coming or arrival, such as the advent of spring. But when the word begins with a capital A, we know it refers to the period of anticipation and preparation for the coming of the Christ child, culminating on Christmas Day. Advent is a time of waiting. We all know what it is like to wait. We wait in line at the store. We wait for the doctor to see us.

We wait for the results of tests. We wait for the red light to turn green. Because we are all so busy, we are not very patient as we are waiting. This season can be very stressful as we shop for gifts, decorate the house, host and attend parties ~ all of this on top of our usual day-to-day jobs or chores.

Advent is not meant to be stressful. On the contrary, it is meant to be a time of quiet reflection, of prayer, of special services to commemorate the birth of Jesus, the Incarnation of God on this earth. Celebrating such an amazing gracious act of God should be a time of celebration, of joyful anticipation, of gift giving because of God's gift to us. In our consumer-driven society, it is easy to get caught up in all the demands of the Christmas season.

My hope for you is that during this season of Advent you will take a few minutes each day to be quiet, to pray, to listen, to read the Christmas story in the Gospel of Luke reminding you of the reason for our celebration. Then when

Christmas Day arrives, you will be able to enjoy the celebration with family and friends, the gift-giving, the beauty of the day, as you remember the words of the prophet Isaiah, "For unto us a child is born, a son is given and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

Bill joins me in wishing you all a blessed Christmas!

Faithfully yours, Marge Palmer

#### December Events:

*Movie Night: "The Muppet Christmas Carol,"* Dec. 1, 7 - 9 pm

*Deacons' Parents' Day Out*  
Dec. 2, 10 am to 2 pm

*Advent Craft Workshop* page 7  
Dec. 3

*Advent Taizé Services* page 7  
Dec. 5, 12, 19

*Christmas Pageant: "Archangel Gabriel"* page 2  
Dec. 10

*Christmas Eve Services* page 7  
Dec. 24

*Special Harp Music During Worship* page 7  
Dec. 31

## Miriam's Column

Angels, Angels Everywhere!

This year angels will be helping the Stone Church family prepare for Christmas and focus on celebrating Christ's birth. Just as those angels said so long ago, "Be not afraid! We bring you good news," our angels reassure us as well. It is possible to reduce stress and the distractions of consumerism and focus on preparing for Christ's birth and sharing God's love with others!

On Nov. 26 church school students will begin making Advent Wreaths and will receive a guide to use them at home, as well as an Advent Calendar with doors to open each day from Dec. 1 until Christmas. Advent Wreaths and other crafts can be made by all ages at the Dec. 3 Advent Craft Workshop (see article on page 7).

Pick up a copy of "Whose Birthday Is It, Anyway?" (\$2) from the church school table in the Social Hall on Sundays for helpful ideas on how to

heed the angels' message. Consider alternative gifts that support recycling or give gifts to help those in need around the world through Heifer Project, Habitat for Humanity or the Alternative Gift Faire.

Church school students will enjoy singing Christmas carols in Music Time on Dec. 3 and then Kindergarten-Grade 5 will learn from the "Angels Announcing God's Message" workshops on Dec. 10 and 17.

A super highlight this year is the opportunity for the whole church family to see the Christmas Pageant, *Archangel Gabriel's Awesome Adventure*, on Sunday, Dec. 10. Our young people have been learning fun songs and sometimes humorous lines to share the angels' perspective on helping God announce His special gift to the world! Please support them and give yourself a memorable experience! (See the article at right for more detail on this wonderful event.)

God bless,  
Miriam Kishi,  
Christian Education Associate

## Archangel Gabriel's Awesome Adventure

More than 20 Stone Church young people, age 4 to grade 8, would like to invite you to a Christmas Pageant, *Archangel Gabriel's Awesome Adventure*, at 3 pm, Sunday, Dec. 10.

This enchanting musical fantasy for Advent unfolds as God assembles his angels in heaven to ask them to bring His *good news* to people on earth.

With snappy dialog and peppy songs, this *Adventure* will keep you laughing and tapping your toes ~ tears of joy are also encouraged. The young folks have been diligently rehearsing since early Oct. and are accompanied by piano, trumpet, guitar, drum, and flute.

Invite friends, relatives, and neighbors to celebrate Advent with Stone's children ~ such an important part of our church's wonderful ministry.

**And as an extra treat, at 2:30 pm, the Stone Church Brass Choir will get us in the holiday spirit with some old-fashioned caroling!** - Bill Downes

## Library Provides Mini-Reviews on Different Views of Christmas

This month, our church library gives you mini-reviews of two books that take a slightly different approach to Christmas, as well as providing lists of their new, exciting books!

Reminder: If you would like to write a mini-review of a Stone Church Library book, please contact Sue Evans.

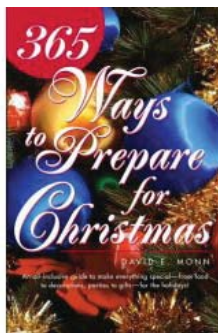
*Unplug the Christmas Machine* by Jo Robinson (394.2 Rob)



This is a helpful guide for approaching common problems: stress, time crunch, family altercations, overspending, etc. It's especially helpful in dealing with children who have high expectations, helping them under-

stand ways to enjoy Christmas other than receiving a lot of gifts.

*365 Ways to Prepare for Christmas* by David E. Monn (394.2 Mon)



This very useful book has how-tos for making inexpensive gifts such as raspberry vinegar and book covers, as well as for making wreaths, decorations, gift wrappers and special cards. The recipes and menus for brunches, dinners, and parties are quite varied and include pumpkin muffins, mini-quiches, Christmas pizza bites, bûche de Noël, and many other delicious-sounding concoctions.

- both mini-reviews by Sue Evans

New books for young folks include:

- ☛ *Max's Christmas* by Rosemary Wells (1st Bks Wel)
- ☛ *Pup's Supper* by Victoria Miles (1st Bks Mil)

New books for adults include:

- ☛ *The New Green Christmas: How to Make This & Every Holiday an Environmental Celebration* by The Evergreen Alliance (394 Eve)
- ☛ *An Eye for Beauty* by Evelyn Lauder (770 Lau)
- ☛ *Traveling on Your Own: 250 Great Ideas for Group and Solo Vacations* by Eleanor Berman (910 Ber)

New books in special collections:

- ☛ *When Someone You Love Has a Mental Illness* by Rebecca Woolis (Spec Needs 616.8 Woo) and
- ☛ *I Am Not Sick; I Don't Need Help! Helping the seriously mentally ill accept treatment* by Xavier Amador (Spec Needs 616.8 Ama), both given by Kate Wheatley

Come browse in our library, or visit the book cart at Coffee Hour.

- Sue Williams, Library Coordinator

## Sunday Adult Study

**Dec. 3 - 24: Book Study: Jesus' Final Week in Jerusalem, led by Pat Magee**

Using the Gospel of Mark as a guide, *The Last Week: A Day-by-Day Account of Jesus' Final Week in Jerusalem*, by Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan, depicts Jesus giving up his life to protest power without justice and to condemn the rich who lack concern for the poor. At the end of the week, Jesus marches up Calvary, offering himself as a model for others to do the same when they are confronted by similar issues. Informed, challenged, and inspired, we will not only meet the historical Jesus, but a new Jesus who engages us and invites us to follow him. *There is no adult study class on Dec. 31.*

**In January: Humans and the Natural World: A First Look at Environmental Sustainability, with Dr. Jonathan Miller, Professor of Geology, San Jose State**

Greater and greater demands are being made on the earth for energy, food, water, and land, as more and more people and nations aspire to Western standards of living and mass consumption. As a result, climate is warming, soil loss is accelerating, clean water is scarcer, and ongoing armed conflict partly tied to securing energy has become a part of our geopolitical reality. We will take a first look at the changes and modifications occurring on Earth, then explore the concept of ecologic and environmental sustainability.

## Dreams as Keys to our Spiritual Selves

When Stone's Henrietta Perdue Lecture Series was first established, the initial speaker was a Jungian psychologist and Episcopal priest, John Sanford, whose topic was *Dreams: God's Forgotten Language*. Now, over 30 years later, we have another opportunity to explore this amazing and wonderful language of dreams, with another world-renowned teacher and writer, Dr. Jeremy Taylor, a Unitarian Universalist minister, internationally recognized teacher, and author of three books on dream symbolism, mythology, and archetypal energy.

We all dream several times a night, and each dream is like a snapshot from the unconscious, showing us what we do not yet grasp with our waking mind. How can we work with our dreams to understand our complex spiritual selves? How does understanding our dreams affect

our life in the world? In this workshop with Dr. Taylor, we will explore these questions and the fundamental assumptions and techniques for group and individual dream work. We'll ground our theory in experience by sharing our dreams (always voluntary).

Here are the schedule and costs:

**Dates:** 7:30 - 9:30 pm, Fri., Jan. 26, 2007, continuing 9:30 am - 5:30 pm, Sat., Jan. 27

**Location:** Stone's Social Hall

**Fee:** \$40 before Jan. 15 (\$45 after Jan. 15)

**Checks:** payable to Stone Church

**Sign-up:** during Coffee Hour beginning Dec. 10

**Contact:** Mary Alice Collins

## Middle School Group Camps in Luxury

Sixteen Middle School students (pictured below) had a great time *camping in luxury* at a beautiful ranch in Morgan Hill, complete with horses, goats and wild deer.

Games, hiking, eating and some sleeping were enjoyed by all. The highlight of the event was riding a

vehicle, which was a cross between a tractor and jeep, up the mountain to be able to appreciate all of God's creation.

Many thanks to Kate Wheatley, Steve Nelson, Alex Zisch and Rosaleen Zisch - our chaperones par excellence.





## Session Beat

At its regular meeting on Nov. 14, Session approved a memorandum of agreement with the Session of First Presbyterian Church, San Jose, for a 6-month loan of their memorial handbells (see article on page 7).

The Session approved using up to \$4,500 from the Peter Holt bequest to purchase much-needed audio-visual equipment. Adequate, secure storage and a system to track who is using the equipment are must-haves, as well.

There was discussion about making sure church facilities are securely locked when events have ended. It was reiterated that all events must have a designated person for opening and closing everything used by an event.

At the request of Church & World Board, Session approved serving only fair trade coffee and tea at Stone Church. In part, the motion said, "Purchasing fair trade products to use at Stone Church shows our commitment to justice, respect, peace, the environment and fair wages." Presbyterian Women have already been selling fair trade products here for 5 years.

The Stewardship Board reported that pledges since Consecration Sunday total about \$315,000, and many show increases in giving. Session suggested that *generational* analysis, showing giving by age group, would be helpful. Derk Johnson was praised for his good work on the new approach to giving.

Christian Education reported 287 attendees at the Dominic Crossan lecture on Friday night, 180 on Saturday, and 55 at the adult class on Sunday.

Church & World reported Stone received \$3,795 for the Peacemaking Offering in October; 25% is being sent to God's Mission-Cuban Evangelism. (One Great Hour of Sharing received \$4,057.29 and the Pentecost Offering totaled \$1,833.75.)

- Alice Thorn, Clerk of Session

## To Save \$\$ and Trees – go Online Only!

Would you like to help more with the *Greening* of Stone Church? And also with the church budget?

Already, 50 of you have signed up to receive only the online version of *The Stone News* (this is up from 29 last month). Thanks so much for your concern for the environment and for saving the church some money.

To give the rest of you an incentive, MJ has put some estimated costs together. Did you know that it costs the church almost 50 cents a copy to mail you *The Stone News*? That's a total of over \$1,700 a year. And that does not include volunteer time (which MJ estimates at 120 hours a year) from our production crew, who

patiently fold, collate and affix mailing labels. And of course with online only, you are also saving trees!

We know that many of you do not have a computer, and we have no plans to stop printing copies altogether. We are simply appealing to those of you who have computers. And if enough folks sign up for online only, we can then afford to send members without computers *The Stone News* by first class mail, insuring that everyone will get it near the first of the month (with the current bulk rate method, there is no delivery guarantee).

So *Think Green* and let MJ in the church office know if you would like to go *Online Only*!



## Helpful, Year-End Financial Notes

### No Tax When Transferring IRA Funds Directly to Stone Church

The Pension Protection Act of 2006, signed into law Aug. 17, allows Individual Retirement Account (IRA) owners age 70 1/2 and older to make direct gifts to public charities from IRA accounts without first counting them as income and paying income tax. The law covers all gifts made this year and next. Historically, you could only withdraw money from an IRA, pay taxes, and then make a gift. This method acts as if you never earned the money.

To qualify:

- The donor must be 70 1/2 years of age or older;
- The transfers must go directly from the IRA to qualified charities;
- Gifts cannot exceed \$100,000 per taxpayer per year; and
- Gifts must be outright.

The benefit to you and to Stone Church is that you can use this method to fund your annual gift and/or your capital campaign gift.

What a great way to express your gratitude and passion and act in a disciplined manner.

### Contributions for 2006 Due On or Before December 31

In accordance with IRS regulations, 2006 contributions must be made during 2006 to be deductible on your 2006 tax return. Please ensure that the contributions toward your 2006 pledges are either received in the office or postmarked no later than Sunday, Dec. 31, 2006, so we can provide you with a 2006 statement that shows your contributions and is in conformance with the tax law. Donations made after that date will be recorded in 2007.

### 2007 Pledge Envelopes in Social Hall after December 12

Please pick up your pledge envelopes in the Social Hall after Dec. 12. If you pledge on a weekly basis, you will receive a 54-envelope box. If you pledge monthly or quarterly, you will receive a smaller 14-envelope box. Pledge envelopes are not provided if you make a one-time contribution or have direct withdrawal of funds from your bank account.

Please contact Dick Kistler, treasurer, or Sally Magee, financial secretary, if you have any questions.



## News from PW

We are in the season of Advent, looking forward to Christmas and what this means to us. As God graciously gave His Son to us, we remember to give to others.

PW will again be accepting toys to donate to Sacred Heart Community Service, so many children may be able to celebrate. Circle members are asked to bring a toy to their Dec. meeting. If others wish to contribute, we will be happy to give them a copy of the wish list. Claudia Hamm will collect and deliver the toys; contact her for delivery information.

### Epiphany Tea at Stone

Presbyterian Women in the Presbytery will holding their Epiphany Tea on Jan. 7 from 2 to 4 pm at Stone. Please mark your calendars now.

### Women's Build

Habitat for Humanity's Women's Build is going well. Hilleguus Faber, Kathleen Oliver, Jeanette Rapp, Joyce Summers, June Tablak, Connie Pearson, Janice Goertz, Rhonda Lakatos, Tina Luebcke, and Nancy Weiss have all worked on this project and report that they accomplished good work. Drive by Willow St. (across from the Catholic Church) to view the project (see article and picture on page 6).

*Reminder: All PW activities are open to all women of the congregation.*

### PW Calendar

Amethyst Circle: noon, Dec. 6, Jan Keifer's home

Emerald Circle: 10 am, Dec. 7, Carolyn Clendenning's home

Sapphire Circle: 6:30 pm, Dec. 11, Jeanette Rapp's home

Focus Group: 9:30 am, Dec. 5, Elizabeth Shandera's home

Book Group I: 1:30 pm, Dec. 4, Elizabeth Shandera (*Mayflower*)

Book Group II: 2:30 pm, Dec. 18, Nancy Weiss's home (*March*)

Lunch Bunch: 11:30 am, Dec. 12, Taiwan Restaurant; call Ida Raby.

Prayer Shawl groups have chosen to work at home in Dec. and will resume meetings in January. (Contact Janice Goertz with questions.)

Bible Study with Marge: 9:30 am, Dec. 28, Library/Conference Room

- Catherine Amos

## Church & World Asks You to Be Instruments of Justice & Peace

During Advent as we await the coming of the Prince of Peace, we discover many ways we can be instruments of the justice and peace that we pray for. Here are some of our many requests for help and ways we can be a part of bringing love, peace and justice to those in need.

If you prefer your gift to be a monetary one, \$20 will provide an iron-rich formula for an infant, and \$50 will provide a family of four with a holiday dinner.



### Rainbow Flag

The Rainbow Flag has arrived, and the Family Flag to accompany it is being considered as we go to press.



### Sacred Heart Community Service

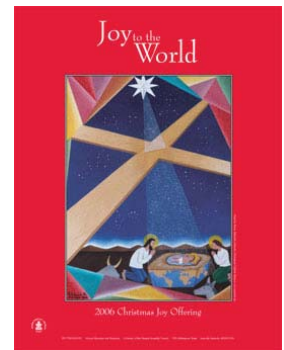
The holiday season is a special time at Sacred Heart. Santa's helpers are needed for the Toy Box where 15,000 toys and gifts will be received and distributed. If you would like to help with Toy Box setup, be at Sacred Heart at 8:30 am or 1 pm, Sun., Dec. 17.

During this special time when families gather around a bountiful table, food items, especially frozen turkeys and chickens, hams, and infant formula, are needed. If you want to help brighten the holidays by packing food boxes, be at Sacred Heart at 8:30 am or 1 pm, Sat., Dec. 16.



### Friends Outside Giving Tree

Please stop by the Church & World Christmas Giving Tree in the Social Hall to choose an ornament to help a family sponsored by Friends Outside. Ornaments list both personal gifts for family members and food items for the family's holiday dinner. All donations must be received by Dec. 3. Kathie Lloyd and Nancy Weiss will be with the tree to help you.



### Christmas Joy Offering

The Christmas Joy Offering will be received on Christmas Eve. This year the offering will support the education of students at Presbyterian racial ethnic schools and colleges, and help families of active and retired church workers in need, through the assistance program of the Board of Pensions. Watch for more in the church bulletins during Dec. - Bea Groppuso



### Eco-Faithfulness on Fair Trade

Be sure to stop by the eco-faithfulness display, which will focus on issues of Fair and Unfair Trade, after Worship on Dec. 10.



## Stone Women Build Habitat House

Six women from Stone Church (clockwise from top left), Jeanette Rapp, Nancy Weiss, Kathleen Oliver, Joyce Summers, Tina Luebcke, and Hilleguus Faber, worked at Habitat for Humanity's Women's Build Willow St. home, on Saturday, Oct. 28.

Jeanette shared this humorous account: "Hilleguus, with Kathleen and Joyce's help, outfitted a new shed with shelves (built from scratch) and moved supplies into it. Nancy, Tina and I spent most of the day taking out 3 of every 5 huge nails (I can't recall the proper name for them) we pounded into plywood siding because they went in crooked! Getting them to go in straight is quite difficult, but prying them back out is *much* more difficult. Thankfully, exterior siding will cover the results

of our frustration ~ when we smashed the crooked ones in further because we couldn't get them back out!

A few "regulars" seemed to know what they were doing ~ but we had fun (I can say that now that my sore muscles have recuperated) and hopefully we helped a little. Dee, the contractor, surprised me when she said, 'Yes,' they will get the house finished on schedule even with all-volunteer help, maybe even a week earlier than the April target.

I hope to go back a third time and find an easier job than the last two ~ like *painting*, or even watching some paint dry! It is hard work ~ we have greater respect for carpenters now.

And another church member, Betty Spicher, works at this house with her AAUW group about once a week."



## ... While Stone Men Were Busy at Westminster Woods

While the women were helping with Habitat, Stone Church men were helping at Westminster Woods. Counterclockwise from top left, Tom Faber (Gabriel's nephew and a new crew member), Bill Lakatos, Lawrence Summers, Art Holtz, Bruce Raby, Leland Wong, Gabriel Faber, and Gary Weiss are relaying shingles to the roof. (Bill Palmer took this picture and a Woods staff member is at top.)

Leland Wong reports: "We did many things: roofing, capping, finishing on the deck, and breaking concrete footing. In addition to the work, we also enjoyed a spaghetti dinner prepared by Lawrence Summers. On Saturday, we had an interesting discussion, as we usually do, on future projects and steps to expand our ministry as we continue these trips, as well as to move forward."



Another picture from the Middle School Luxury Camping Trip!

For more pictures, please see page 3.

## Christmas Eve Services

*9:30 am Family Worship Service*

*with special choir music by Henry Mollicone:*

### **A Christmas Celebration**

*5:30 pm Family Candlelight Service*

*11 pm Candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols*

*And remember that Karen Theilen and her students will play Special Harp Music at the 9:30 am Worship Service, Dec. 31.*



## Advent Taizé Services

*You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.*  
- Matthew 5: 14-15

Join us for the weekly Taizé Meditation Services on Tuesdays during Advent (Dec 5, 12, and 19). The Sanctuary opens at 6:30 pm for music and meditation, and the service begins at 6:45 pm.



*The Deacons' Annual Senior Tea will be Sunday, Jan. 21, 2007, from 3 to 5 pm in the Social Hall.*  
**Save the Date!**

## Advent Craft Workshop



Come to Stone's annual Advent Craft Workshop on Dec. 3, from 11 am to 1 pm, in the Social Hall.

Supplies for making Advent Wreaths, as well as the ever-popular Yule Logs, and lots of other fun crafts, will be provided. For questions, contact Ellen Springer.

And please bring any Advent Wreath holders or apparatus that you may already have on hand.

## Handbell Choir Forming



Thanks to Dan and Jean Raby, Stone Church will get a three-octave set of English Handbells on loan from First Presbyterian Church, San Jose.

Jean invites all high school youth and adults to come to learn to ring! Reading music is preferable, but not required. The rehearsal time will be set when the group is formed to best accommodate everyone's schedule.

Contact Jean Raby if you would like to take part in this new choir!

## Stone Snow Trip



The annual Stone Church Snow Trip to Zephyr Point Presbyterian Conference Center at Lake Tahoe will be Jan. 26 - 28, 2007. Contact Fred Oliver if you are interested.