



THE OPEN DOOR

The Briarcliff Congregational Church

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Volume 69 Number 4

December 2016

“BEHOLD, I HAVE SET BEFORE YOU AN OPEN DOOR, WHICH NO ONE IS ABLE TO SHUT.” REVELATION 3:8

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Dear Good People of Briarcliff Church:

While Thanksgiving will be over by the time you receive this issue of the m I write before the holiday to communicate how very, very thankful I am for each and every one of you; for all your many kindnesses through this time of my recent surgery; and for all the support, encouragement and help you've showered on me during this crisis. I know it's helped my recovery immeasurably; and in a funny way, I'm delighted to know as long as I live with my prosthetic hip, I'll literally carry the affection and care of BCC within me! Thank you.

Thanksgiving brings us to Advent. 2016 is one of the years that the first Sunday of Advent falls on the weekend of Thanksgiving, so we begin the new season of blessings even as we are still enjoying leftovers from the last! Advent is a time of waiting and preparation. It's also a time of trusting - that the work of healing, along with that of hope, peace, joy and love happens, often, in the dark and below the surface. Biblical authors suggests images like "a thief in the night" surprising us or "birth pangs" alarming us, to discover it. They alert us of the fact we need be watchful and ready during this time. But more than that, it seems to me this year, especially, we need be confident: The work of God and the saving grace of God's-love-poured-out is happening all around us all the time. AND THAT WORK WILL BE BROUGHT TO FULL FRUITION - albeit in God's time and not necessarily in our own! It's our task now to have eyes to see the good God is doing all around us all the time and to exercise our wills to cooperate with it, living as we do in prayerful confidence that there's yet more glory to be revealed!

It's been observed that Advent operates on three levels: We remember what happened in Bethlehem, we anticipate a second coming of Christ, and we prepare to receive God's mercy, love and grace fully in our own lives. All three dynamics engage us with the power to transform and make our word(s) new. What good news this is! My prayer is that we all discover the season's three way dynamics as great blessing and hope.

So I end this missive, as I began it: In thanksgiving - for you, for the journey of faith we share, for the seasons of goodness that we keep and for the season of hope that calls us forward.

Yours, in Christ,

SAVE THESE DATES

December

- 1 *WS Prepare Greens*
- 2 *Church Greening Party*
- 4 *Advent Craft Fair*
- 4 *Messiah Sing Along*
- 11 *Trustee Meeting*
- 11 *WS Cookie Packing*
- 18 *Christmas Pageant*
- 24 *Christmas Eve Service*
5 & 10pm

Contact Us At:

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GIVING TREE TRADITION CONTINUES

The Giving Tree, an initiative of our Benevolence Committee, will appear on November 27th, and remain up through the third week of

Advent. Traditionally, the gifts it solicits are brought for the Christmas pageant, December 18th, and dispersed immediately thereafter.

The Giving Tree is a reminder that several local organizations depend on BCC to help their clients celebrate Christmas, and it provides an opportunity for us to share the holidays with neighbors we'd not otherwise know. Ornamental tags suggest particular gifts those participating might provide. The gifts are distributed through social service agencies with which we've long partnered. We are this year again recruiting **angels** that might do more than a fair share by providing for whole families.

So, watch for the Giving Tree. Take responsibility for a gift or two or even more, and promise to have your offering ready for December 18th. It will enhance your experience of the holidays, even as your generosity will help others; this we promise!



ADVENT CRAFT FAIR DEC 4

This years Advent Craft Fair will take place on Dec. 4th. We need volunteers to sign up for the various craft booths. You'll help our children make Christmas

tree ornaments and small gifts. We have lots of crafts for you to choose from If you do not have an idea for a special craft that

you want to make. Please call the church or see John Panagacos if you would like to take part in this cherished Christmas event.

WOMEN'S SOCIETY

The Women's Society's ladies had a memorable morning, Saturday, November 5, when **Jan Aiello** led us in a mosaic workshop. There are some of us who are hoping for a second lesson because it was so much fun. Truly Jan's art students are blessed to have her. Thank you, Jan, for your creativity, your skill in teaching, and your joyful spirit.

CHRISTMAS ACTIVITIES

Thursday, December 1 at 10:30 in the Eastman Room—Preparation of greens for decorating the sanctuary and outdoor wreaths. Please bring garden gloves and any fresh greens that you might have. This will be followed by an informal lunch. Bring a sandwich; we'll provide drinks and dessert.

Friday, December 2 at 7:30—Greening of the sanctuary, followed by a party at the manse.

Sunday, December 11 from 3:00-5:00—Cookie Packing at Wicki Martin's home at 14 Martling Ave., Pleasantville. Please bring 3 dozen, preferably homemade, cookies to be packed into gift bags and given to people who might enjoy a bit of extra cheer and to staff members to thank them for all their hard work. Please contact **Jill Benzenberg** at 914-941-0860 or jillbenz123@yahoo.com if you need a ride. There will be carpooling from the church parking lot.

Thursday, January 12 at 9:30—Degreening of the church, followed by a business meeting. Many hands make light work—who said that trite thing?!

Saturday, April 29--THE RUMMAGE SALE Please mark your calendars now for this important church-wide date.



CE NEWS

The CE committee was happy to see that the pancake breakfast went well.

The kids had fun participating. Objective achieved. The Halloween coffee hour was also fun. It was difficult to know where to look as Pastor Bonnie was cutting her cake, the children were eating donuts on a string. The mummy wrap seemed to be the most favorite. Our next meeting will focus on Christmas.

Our interview this month is on MaryAnn Junkins. Did you know MaryAnn was in the Air Force? She was born in Ft Dix. After graduating high school she joined the Air Force. She married while in service and had three children: Chris, Brian and Jacqueline. MaryAnn now has five grandchildren the oldest being 19, third year of college. MaryAnn, who was stationed in Alaska, spent ten years living there. She married Kevin in 1996 to have a blended family with Ray and Kim. Both Kevin and MaryAnn beamed to tell me they were married 23 years. They renewed their vows at 20 years with David Powers. MaryAnn credits Kevin with finding BCC. They were looking and liked it a lot. MaryAnn started with the fellowship committee then team taught the pre ks with Charlotte Bomma. Interesting that Kevin can be found there now. MaryAnn was in the choir and then the deacons plus being head deacon. She enjoys her time in the nursery for the past five years. She reads, says The Lord's Prayer with the little ones and they like to sing. Kevin and MaryAnn are empty nesters now and love to travel. They recently went to Hawaii. I enjoyed hearing all about MaryAnn. I know you will too.



BIBLE STUDY

One Saturday November 12 we completed the three part Bible study on the Book of Acts. Pastor Bonnie and I led the discussions. This really served as a follow-up program to the Bible study we did last spring on the final portions of the Gospel According to Luke. Both programs were successful; we had good attendance, averaging about twenty, and even attracted a few people from outside the church. The discussions were lively and substantive.

Both programs were very rewarding for me personally and I want to take this opportunity to offer some thanks. First of all, I thank Pastor Bonnie. Her understanding of scripture and the relevant theology was essential. You also have to admire her for managing to make it from the manse into the Eastman Room barely a week after hip replacement surgery! I must admit that the two of us had great fun planning the sessions. Thanks also go to the Deacons who assisted with logistics and to our Church Administrator, Jodi who was so helpful in copying maps and pictures for us. But most of all, I want to thank the people who participated. Your continuing interest and enthusiasm were inspiring and your insights enhanced our understanding of the material as we worked together to discern its meaning. It was a great experience for me and I am grateful to all the people who made it so rewarding.

NEWS FROM THE PASTORAL SEARCH COMMITTEE

As we embark on the search for our new pastor, the Pastoral Search Committee thought you might be interested in learning about our process.

Our goal is to present a candidate to you, the congregation, by June of 2017, Bonnie's retirement date. To meet this goal, we will need to accomplish many tasks over the next seven months, including:

- Draft our church profile (which is essentially our job posting, as explained below);
- Review and assess candidates' profiles;
- Conduct interviews and assess candidates; and
- Observe, interview and select a final candidate for presentation to the congregation.

For the last few weeks, we have been busy working on the first key task, writing our church profile. Our church profile is a comprehensive description of BCC, its history and mission, and describes who we are, who God is calling us to become and whom God is calling to minister with us. Its purpose is twofold: to inform candidates of the kind of spiritual leader we are seeking, and help candidates decide whether BCC is a church they would like to be called to serve. While the committee has written much of BCC's profile, we are requesting the congregation's input on many aspects of our church life through both surveys and small group discussions. During the month of December and continuing into January, we plan to read, compile and prayerfully discuss your input to help us finalize our profile. Our goal is to submit our profile for posting on the UCC website by mid-January.

We thank you for entrusting us with this most important undertaking. In an effort to ensure that all voices are heard, we encourage everyone to share with us your thoughts, questions or concerns by either emailing Mel Corbett (mel_c_corbett@msn.com), Sheri Gausepohl (sheri.gausepohl@gmail.com), or any other member of the committee, or by talking with any of us before or after Sunday worship.

Yours in faith,
Mel Corbett (co-chair), Sheri Gausepohl (co-chair),
Judy Beck, Ted Buerger, Barbara Gasparik,
Brian Lewis, Kevin Junkins, Nancy Panagacos,
Debra Stewart, Robyn Wild

MUSIC NEWS FROM FIMI

First, we congratulate Charlotte Luttkus for her list of accomplishments: she was selected to the NAFME (National Association for Music Educators) National Mixed Choir held in Texas in November; ACDA (American Choral Directors Association) National Honor Choir in Minneapolis later in the spring, and she was also selected to the All-State Choir, which she had to forgo for the National Festival.

Charlotte has been a bright spot in our music program, singing from the time she came to BCC in fourth grade, and now she is applying to music schools for college! Peter and I are very proud of her and share the joy of her recent accomplishments.

The cherubs are singing for Thanksgiving Sunday on 11/20, and we are rehearsing to sing at the Christmas Pageant and Christmas Eve family service. The Holiday Choir rehearsals are underway. We have some new people participating, 5 sopranos, 3 altos and 5 basses! Our special Christmas music presentation will be presented on the morning of 12/20 where we combine the Senior Choir and the Holiday Choir.

Dustin Qian, son of Xiaobing and Dapeng Qian will accompany the women's choir on the flute for us, and Ryan Capozzo, one of our 2016 scholarship recipients will sing a solo and also in the choir. This is a very uplifting service, celebrated by beautiful music. Please bring friends and family to this musical worship service.

On Christmas Eve, the Cherub Choir and Senior Choir will sing, Charlotte Luttkus will sing a solo, Kathy Browning and Karen Sharman will play some Christmas medley on the hammer dulcimer and guitar, and Connor Frost will be on the trumpet.

We look forward to the season of expectancy, hope and peace.

Blessings, Fimi

TRUSTEES REPORT

Budget work headlines the Trustees report. After a good budget presentation meeting with members of the congregation on November 6, the Trustees continue to respond to concerns, refine the numbers, and search for ways to enhance income while tightening expenses.

At the current pace, we are on track to meet our budget goals for pledge income. Thank you to all who have kept BCC in their hearts and minds, and their pledges up to date. We look forward to your continued support as we close out the year. In addition to pledge income, building rentals are making a significant impact on our bottom line. The Trustees continue to seek new tenants, renters, community groups needing space to meet. Recently a local church—Iglesia El Sembrador—contacted us, looking for space to rent for worship on multiple days and evenings; we are working with that group toward a possible arrangement. We are excited about the prospect of opening our hearts and facilities to another family of Christ, with mutually beneficial results.

We have engaged a new insurance company, Guide One, who writes coverages on behalf of Mount Vernon Fire Insurance Company, to provide us with a full suite of property and liability coverages. The switch moves BCC from a group plan to our own individual plan, with appropriate levels of coverage, and more control over the claims process. Our new carrier offers admitted coverages and has a top tier rating from AM Best of A++ X. This change will also save BCC approximately \$7,000 in annual insurance premiums this year!!

Trustees are working with the Pastoral Search Committee to recommend a realistic salary range (using UCC guidelines) as well as benefit amounts, such as for car allowance, value of the Manse as a benefit, etc., for the new minister. We are confident and excited that we can offer a robust compensation package that should attract top quality candidates. Buildings and Grounds, with

the help of the Women's Society has identified projects in the Manse that need to be accomplished now for Bonnie and her family, and prior to a new occupant's moving in.

The handicapped accessibility project continues to be a huge undertaking, deserving of additional thoughtful consideration and information gathering. At the last Trustees' meeting, there was a lot of discussion about various points of view (aesthetics vs access; what is optimal, what is acceptable, what can we afford), and we agreed we have a lot more work to do before an option is formally presented. We definitely need a better consensus of which plan to undertake before we can move ahead and get estimates from contractors. If you have an opinion, please share it with us. If you are still undecided on this topic, please attend an upcoming Council meeting to hear more about the initiatives or ask a Trustee or Buildings/Grounds member for more details.

As reported earlier, the 2016 Christmas Offering, as recommended to Church Council, will be used to fund much-needed accessibility improvements to our church facilities. We strive to be an open and welcoming church, including people of all physical abilities.

We are happy to welcome the New Westchester Symphony Orchestra for the wonderful Messiah Sing-A-Long on Sunday afternoon, December 4, at 3pm. Please come join the happy chorus.

Respectfully submitted,

Kevin Beicke, Brian Lewis, Carol Mickel,
Karen Sharman, Jim Stewart, Robyn Wild





CHRISTMAS OFFERING

The 2016 Christmas Offering, as recommended to Church Council, will be used to fund much-needed accessibility improvements to our church facilities. We strive to be an open and welcoming church, including people of all physical abilities.



CHRISTMAS SUNDAY SCHOOL SCHEDULE

On the Sundays of Dec. 4th and 11th the children will go directly to BeeBe Hall at 10 AM to sing Christmas carols and hear the story of Christmas. Then they then attend their regular Sunday School classes.

We will rehearse the Christmas Pageant on Sat. Dec 17th at 9 AM in the Church. We will be done by 11 AM. The Christmas Pageant will take place on Sunday Dec. 18 at noon. On that day the children will be fed lunch during Sunday School.



PEANUT BUTTER SUNDAYS

First Sunday of each month. Please help feed your neighbors by grabbing an extra jar of peanut butter when you're shopping. We collect peanut butter during the Eucharist as a timely reminder to break bread with those in need.

We're also happy to announce our past months' Peanut Butter counts:

June – 22 jars of 16 oz, 1 jar of 28 oz, 1 jar, 40 oz

July – 20 jars of 16 oz, 1 jar of 40 oz

September – 12 jars of 16 oz, 1 jar of 28 oz, 1 jar of 40 oz



BENEVOLENCE NEWS

The Benevolence Committee is in full swing supporting the outreach mission at BCC. Please read on for much more on this!

Coat Drive Wrap Up: Thank you for your generosity!

As the temperature drops, our Coat Drive ensures clients and friends of IFCA (Inter-Faith Council for Action) in Ossining stay warm through the winter months. Our drive collected gently used coats of all sizes and genders for three weeks in November. The final count is not yet in, but the bins were full each Sunday, so we are anticipating making a substantial contribution or warm outerwear for our neighbors in need.

Giving Tree: Runs from the first Sunday of Advent, Nov 27th through Dec 18th

The Tree will have gift tags for 4 organizations - Hope's Door, For All Seasons, Ossining Food Pantry, and the Ossining Prison Ministry. Everyone is encouraged to pick up one or more tags and bring the gifts to the church for us to distribute. The Giving Tree is an important initiative, enabling neighbors in our area to celebrate the holidays. Previous recipients have expressed their sincere gratitude for our support, and we are happy to support them again this year!

Angels Program: This holiday initiative runs concurrently with the Giving Tree.

Members of the congregation have an opportunity to sponsor and purchase Christmas gifts for a family through the Ossining Children's Center, or to grant the wish of a single child through the Grandparent's Coalition. It is a way to have a direct connection in spreading the joy of the season. If you would like to be a sponsor, please contact Kristen Basil.

Peanut Butter Sundays: First Sunday of the month. This coincides with the Eucharist, which is about breaking bread with our neighbors. Peanut Butter Sundays are continuing and are greatly appreciated by the Ossining Food Pantry. Collection is in the "Peanut Butter" wicker basket in the vestibule or put a cash donation in the special envelopes in the collection plate.

Recent Benevolence Committee allocations address both global and local needs: We have extended the reach of BCC in support of Hurricane Matthew relief through a contribution to the UCC One Great Hour of Sharing disaster relief fund. The committee has also voted to commit funding over a 5-year period to local housing through IFCA. Also, financial support has also been earmarked for the Ossining Emergency Shelter Program through the Jan and Wayne Byers Memorial Fund.

Special Opportunities Fund – A reminder for year-end

Applications for grants through this fund, which support individual educational opportunities, are available in the Church office and through the website. Anyone looking for scholarship assistance in January needs to have the application in by the end of December. Talk to anyone on the committee if you have questions.

Thanks to the congregation for your continuing generosity!

Kristen, Nancy, Penny, Janet, Mary



BRIARCLIFF CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

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December 2016						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 Women's Society Prepare Greens and luncheon 10am	2 Women's Society Greening Party 7:30pm	3
4 Advent Craft Fair Messiah Sing Along 3pm	5	6	7	8	9	10
11 Trustee Meeting 11:30 Women's Society Cooking Packing 3-5pm	12	13	14	15	16	17
18 Christmas Pageant 12pm	19	20	21	22	23	24 Christmas Eve 5pm & 10pm
25 Christmas Day No Sunday School	26	27	28	29	30	31