

The Lexington United Methodist Church

an inclusive and reconciling United Methodist Congregation

Newsletter

January 2004

Vol. 52, No. 1

From the Pastor's Study...

Inspired by this year's Christmas Pageant, *The Twelve Days of Christmas*, I have my own ruminations to offer on this year's "twelve days of Christmas" which begin on December 26th and end on Epiphany, January 6th. Filled with the memories and hopes of the Lexington UMC community, these days call forth these thoughts.

On the first day of Christmas, I caught up on my rest
And slept for many hours until I felt my best.

On the second day of Christmas, poinsettias were delivered here and there,
Homebound friends received LUMC's loving care.

On the third day of Christmas, Sunday came around
And a medley of carols filled the church with Christmas sounds.

On the fourth day of Christmas, I recalled the gold and stars,
Peace doves and angel's dust, a fabulous Christmas pageant by standards near and far.

On the fifth day of Christmas, Scrooge came to mind,
A Christmas Eve story of a very special kind.

On the sixth day of Christmas, the New Year was rung in.
My prayer? Peace on earth, good will to women and to men.

On the seventh day of Christmas, resolutions for '04 took shape.
Justice, peace and love may we continue to make.

On the eighth day of Christmas, the choirs' anthems I remembered.
What music for the soul was sung this past December.

On the ninth day of Christmas, I gave thanks for LUMC's vision
And celebrated again our inclusive and reconciling decision.

On the tenth day of Christmas our covenant we did renew
A year of faith and fellowship surely will ensue.

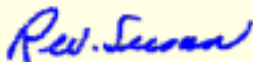
On the eleventh day of Christmas, extended prayer time I did take,
Counting blessings, giving thanks for each of your dear sake.

The twelfth day of Christmas will mark Epiphany,
Let us each gift the Christ Child on bended knee.

"What shall we give him?" You want to do your part?

"What shall we give him?" Let's each give Christ our heart.

With thanks for this season and hope for our tomorrows,



Rev. Susan J. Morrison

On the Inside...

January Worship	2
Letter from Bishop Hassinger	3
Christian Education News	4

Adult Study Opportunities	6
Reaching Out	7
Worship Workshop	8

January Worship 2004

January 4 Covenant Sunday - Epiphany Celebration Service of Word and Table

9:15 am Praise Music
9:30 am Worship, *Godly Play*, Sunday School

Using the Epiphany lessons from Isaiah 60:1 - 6 and Matthew 2:1 - 12, Rev. Susan will preach on *The Fourth Gift: The Gift of Love* using O. Henry's beloved story *The Gift of the Magi*.

Wesley's Covenant Service will invite a renewal of our covenant with God as we begin a new year. Holy Communion will be celebrated.

January 11 Baptism of the Lord Sunday

9:15 am Praise Music
9:30 am Worship, *Godly Play*, Sunday School

Rev. Cynthia Good will preach *Listening for God's Voice* focusing on baptism and call. Her texts will be Isaiah 43:1-7 and Luke 3:15-17,21-22.

January 18 Human Relations Sunday

9:00 am Holy Communion served in the library
9:15 am Praise Music
9:30 am Worship, *Godly Play*, Sunday School

Mrs. Dina Davis from Liberia will be our preacher. The lessons will be read from Psalm 8; Revelation 21:1 - 6a and Matthew 25:31 - 46. Pastor George Walters-Sleyon will present his project on behalf of the orphans at Mrs. Davis' orphanage in Liberia and our special Human Relations Sunday offering will be given to this project.

January 25 Third Sunday after the Epiphany

9:15 am Praise Music
9:30 am Worship, *Godly Play*, Sunday School

Rev. Susan's sermon topic will be *The Word IS Fulfilled*. The lectionary readings from Psalm 19, 1 Corinthians 12:12 - 31a and Luke 4:14 - 21 will inform her message. Food items for Roxbury Food Pantry will be collected.

Worship Goal:  **100 adults and children in worship each Sunday**

November/December Worship Attendance

Nov. 23: 112 Nov. 30: 99 Dec 14: 101

MAKE WORSHIP A PRIORITY OF YOUR WEEK.

2003 Annual Reports due January 15, 2004

Committee chairpersons and church leaders are asked to send their 2003 Annual Reports to the church office by January 15, 2004. The preferred method is to relay Word documents by email (office@lexumc.org).

Charge Conference January 14, 2004

A portion of our Administrative Council meeting on Wednesday, January 14 at 8:00 pm will become a Charge Conference to approve our 2004 budget.

John Kramer Recital at LUMC February 7

John Kramer will perform a piano recital at LUMC on Saturday, February 7 at 7:30 pm in the Sanctuary. John will perform selections of Bach, Beethoven, Chopin and Rzewski.



2004 Upper Room Disciplines Available

The *Upper Room Disciplines* is found in many of our households and used daily many of us. Scripture, commentary and prayer are contained on each page. The daily Bible readings follow the cycle of lectionary readings; therefore, the texts studied are the same as the readings for the coming Sunday.

Copies of the *2004 Upper Room Disciplines* will be on sale in Martin Hall for \$9.00. You are encouraged to pick up a copy for yourself and your household. This daily devotional guide will encourage you into a daily habit of scripture readings and prayer, for it is in daily practice that our faith becomes relevant and alive.

February Newsletter Articles due
Monday, January 26, 2004

The Path With a View

2003 Stewardship Drawing to a Close!

As the last few pledges filter in and we approach closure on this year's Stewardship Campaign to underwrite the operations of the Lexington United Methodist Church, we are pleased to announce that our campaign is on track and preliminary results appear to be favorable. There are several pledges still outstanding, so final results will be communicated in February's Newsletter. We urge those of you who are still contemplating their pledges for 2004 to complete your deliberations soon so we can finalize this important item of the Church Budget. Thank you all for your gifts and blessings.



Grace and Peace,

Dale Brunelle, Stewardship Chair

Susan Morrison, Pastor

"You have made known to me the Path of Life." Psalm 16:11

To all in the New England Conference — Bishop Hassinger wants you to know of her plans... this means a new bishop will be assigned to us to begin in September, 2004.

Bishop Susan W. Hassinger Announces Retirement Plans

After an extended period of prayerful discernment, I have decided to request early retirement, at the end of the current quadrennium, at the end of August, 2004.

Until recently, I had intended to serve for one more quadrennium in the active episcopacy. And I was sensing a direction in which God was leading me for service beyond that time of assignment to residential/presidential responsibilities as a bishop.

This fall, through a variety of experiences as well as through prayer, it was becoming apparent to me that I was being drawn toward a ministry in retirement that would focus on spiritual direction (especially with clergy both entering and those of longer years), retreat-leading, teaching or consulting in areas of leadership development, and guiding groups in learning corporate decision-making models in addition to parliamentary procedure. I could not avoid the question that kept surfacing: "Why not now?"

In the time of discernment, it felt as though I was weighing two "goods." And I will miss much of the active episcopacy - not least of which is working with the marvelous people, the leaders and staff - of this annual conference. But, in the "weighing" process, I could not ignore the sense of calling to carry out my ministry as bishop in a different way in retirement.

I have tested this discernment with a variety of persons and groups, and have some sense of some specific ways in which that yearning might be carried out. It feels like a stepping out in faith, but there also is a sense of peace about making the decision.

I share now with you my decision, and ask for your prayers as I take this step. I assure you that, as we go through this time of transition together, with all of the feelings that that brings, you will be in my prayers.

- Susan W. Hassinger

Christian Education News

Godly Play

This month our children will be learning about these themes in *Godly Play!*

January 5 Epiphany

January 11 Baptism

January 18 The Good Shepard

January 25 The Good Samaritan

This month our children will explore stories that teach the morals and values of good Christians. A truly special and unique gift to give your child this year --- the gift of *Godly Play!*

What is Godly Play?

Godly Play is a Christian Education program which grew out of the Montessori method of education. *Godly Play* is designed to honor each child as a spiritual person with his or her own spiritual journey and to teach children about worship and scripture experientially through the worshipful atmosphere of the classroom and the carefully told lessons.

How do I know my child is learning?

The most important part of *Godly Play* is the experience of the worshipful environment and the respect for each child as having a spiritual journey. You may find that your child retells the lesson of the day or that he or she wonders during the week about the story. Feel free to engage your child about the week's lesson by being open to your child's point of understanding in the lesson.

Will my child enjoy Godly Play?

One of the goals of *Godly Play* is to create a safe and welcoming space for children. Because everything is designed for them, most children like *Godly Play* and look forward to coming.

2004 Godly Play Registration

In order to keep our records current, the Godly Play team asks parents of Godly Play children (pre-school through fifth grade) to register them each year. *Because food is served in Godly Play, it is especially important that you inform us of any food allergies your child has.* Please return this form to the Christian Ed. Director's mailbox at LUMC.

Parents' Information

Parents' Names _____

Parents' Phone Number(s) _____

Parents' Address(es) _____

Parents' e-mail(s) _____

Children's Information

Child 1 Name _____

Child 1 Birthday _____

Child 1 Allergies _____

Child 2 Name _____

Child 2 Birthday _____

Child 2 Allergies _____

Child 3 Name _____

Child 3 Birthday _____

Child 3 Allergies _____

Child 4 Name _____

Child 4 Birthday _____

Child 4 Allergies _____

NQMA News

What on earth is NQMA?

NQMA stands for the Not-Quite-Middle-Aged Young Adults. We represent LUMC members and friends from their early-twenties to their forties.

Who are we?

We are younger adults who seek fellowship and spiritual growth, who are curious and open, who laugh a lot and who aren't afraid to ask hard questions, questions that may not have an answer. We support and encourage one another in our faith and in our lives.

Why does NQMA exist?

We gather for fun, fellowship, and bible study at least twice a month. We provide a safe place for spiritual support, experimentation, and growth in a small group setting of peers.

What does the NQMA do?

Our primary activity is our every first and third Tuesday Bible study. We also do fun things like go to Shakespeare on the Common, the Earth Day Festival, the Corn Maze, and Six Flags over New England. We hold periodic game-nights in group members' homes. In the spring, we go on a "Run-Away" or retreat which is a time to make new friends and renew our faith.

How do I become a part of NQMA?

NQMA is open to anyone. We are a friendly and accepting group and love to have new members. You can come to group events whether or not you have come before. You can come to our Bible Study whether or not you have read the selection for the week or been to the Bible Study previously.

When is the next meeting?

Our next meeting is Tuesday, January 6, 2004, at 7:30 pm in LUMC's Library. We will be starting a discussion study on a few individuals from *Contemporary Theologians* by Fr. James Bacik. This is a great time to join!

See you there!

Christmas Pageant Thanks!

A big thank you again to all who helped to make the Christmas Pageant a reality! Thanks especially to Nikki Katulak for her direction and to the Christian Education Committee for all of their hard work and support - and to our wonderful children and youth. You are SuperStars! Thank you, thank you, and thank you!

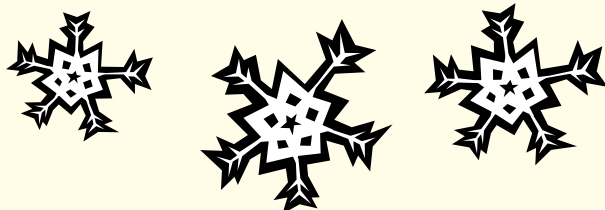


Youth News!

In January, our youth will be learning about our Hebrew Heritage by viewing and discussing stories from the Book of Genesis using the film mini-series *In the Beginning...* This series will be led by Jay Morrison and will continue to meet during the 9:30 am Worship Hour. Questions? Ask Andrea at lauxaj@yahoo.com.

Winter FUN!!!

The youth will be planning a fun winter activity—that requires SNOW—in February. Keep watching the bulletin and February Newsletter for updates! Questions? Ask Andrea at lauxaj@yahoo.com.

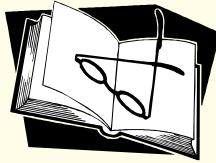


Youth Lock-IN Thanks!

Thank you to all that attended and assisted with the Youth Lock-IN! The youth had a BLAST and expect to see everyone in the congregation for our next all-nighter! 😊😊😊

Adult Study Opportunities

Sunday Mornings 11th Hour Strivers Class Study



The Strivers Class will meet for six Sundays at 11th hour beginning Sunday, January 4, 2004. The book that we will be studying is *The Call of the Awe: Rediscovering Christian Profundity in an Interreligious Era* by Gene W. Marshall.

“Why do we do religion? Religion appears in human life because every human being, even if not fully aware of it, lives in a land of mystery with rushing rivers of freedom, imposing mountains of care, and wild seas of tranquility. This land of mystery penetrates the land of ordinary living at every point. Awe is our experience of this ever-present Eternity. This book is about how the Awe that is happening in our everyday lives is key to understanding both the renewal of Christianity and the need for non-bigoted dialogue among all religions on Earth.”

We will study this book for three or four Strivers study sequences with other materials handed out when appropriate. I anticipate we will study supplemental material from other progressive Christian theologians including Paul Tillich, Rudolf Bultman and the Niebuhr brothers. The cost of the Marshall book is \$20.95. Please see Ken Kreuziger to order a book and indicate that you will be attending Strivers sessions on the six Sundays from January 4 through February 8.

Sermon Talkback/Bible Study

Each Sunday at the 11th hour, the preacher of the morning gathers with those who would like further discussion of the morning's lessons and sermon. Prayer, conversation and good fellowship are intended. The group meets in the Pastor's Study and all are welcome!

Bible and Bagels to Complete Isaiah

Due to the stormy weather in December, the study of Isaiah was never completed. Join Bible and Bagels for the conclusion of this Bible study. On January 5th, the focus will be on Isaiah II (Chapters 40 – 55) which covers the time period of the Exile; on January 12th the focus will be on Isaiah III (Chapters 56 -66) which covers the time period following the Exile and during the return to Israel. The group will decide on the topic and resource for the next study series (January 26 – February 23). Everyone is welcome to join this group which promises lively discussion, prayer and sometimes, even bagels! The study is on Mondays from 10:00 – 11:30 am.

The Web Watch



Type these “URL” addresses into your Internet Explorer to see information pertaining to our LUMC theme “Peace With Justice” that you may not see elsewhere. Your comments, suggestions, and web contributions are welcome and solicited. Please leave them in the Outreach box near the church office or send to Bill Santelmann at: n1au@rcn.com. Thank you!

- <http://www.septembereleventh.org/>

Our goal is to support the 9-11 truth movement itself, led by the victims' families' efforts to obtain full government accountability for the unprecedented intelligence and air defense failures that took place before and during the attacks.

- <http://www.nuclearpolicy.org/>

The Nuclear Policy Research Institute (NPRI) has been established to educate the American public through the mass media about the profound medical, environmental, political and moral consequences of perpetuating nuclear weapons, power and waste. NPRI's founder and president is Helen Caldicott, M.D., also Founding President (1978-83) of Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR).

- <http://www.pbs.org/now/>

NOW with Bill Moyers includes documentary reporting, in-depth one-on-one interviews and articulate commentary from a wide variety of media-makers and those behind the headlines. Bill Moyers, one of the most recognized and respected journalists in America, anchors this hour-long weekly news series offering fresh perspectives and analysis on today's events, issues, and the ideas that are shaping our world.

- <http://www.gbio.org/>

The Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (GBIO) is a broad-based organization which works to coalesce, train, and organize the communities of Greater Boston across all religious, racial, ethnic, class and neighborhood lines for the public good. Our primary goal is to develop local leadership and organized power to fight for social justice.

- Prepared by Bill Santelmann

January Book Club

LUMC's Book Club will meet on Monday, January, 19 at 7:30 pm at Muriel Landers' home. The group will read *The Five People You Meet in Heaven* by Mitch Albom. Everyone is welcome!

REACHING OUT . . .

THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

You continue your magnificent support of the Roxbury Food Pantry with a November collection of more than 200 items. We are on our way to making 2003 the most generous year ever in terms of LUMC's contributions to this needy and appreciative pantry.

Preliminary numbers for the Alternative Christmas Market suggest that we raised over \$3,100.00 for the needy in our country and throughout the world. We will provide you with specific numbers in our next newsletter but for now, know that it is such a joy to be members of the Outreach Committee; you folks make it such an easy task.

Speaking of which, did you see the outpouring of items for the material aid collection for Nicaragua? We can cart as many as 12 full suitcases so... while we are off to a wonderful start, there is still time (for anyone who has forgotten) to bring items to LUMC for inclusion in this year's delivery to our sister church in La Borgoña, Nicaragua. Know that your brothers and sisters in that community constantly offer prayers of thanks and appreciation for LUMC.

by Bob Miner

LETTERS FROM LA BORGONA

This month, I want to share with you, in their own words, what your work in La Borgoña means to the people there. I have received many letters welcoming me as the new chairperson of the committee and thanking ALL of us for all we do. Ours is a mutual relationship where - as Jay put it so eloquently Sunday morning - we have as much (or more) to gain from our friends in La Borgoña as they do from us.

Every letter, no matter who writes it, starts out with a blessing, a greeting in the name of Jesus and God, and a hope that we are in good health and will be richly blessed.

The letter from Yamileth speaks of how she is grateful to be in secondary school and that this is her last year. She hopes to go to the university but needs our help "because here in Nicaragua the poor are not able to go to the university without the help you give us."

Idalia, the head of the sewing program hopes that "God will always grant us good health for the good

we do in helping each year a new group of women to learn to make clothing and help their families." "It is an honor," she says, "to have a good relationship between our church and the Lexington church. We are always grateful for your (LUMC) love of the poor."

Lizeth and Brenda both express deep gratitude to God and us for helping them to go to school. They are 4th year secondary students who are studying "to be in professions in which we can help others."

Jairo writes to me in English sometimes and I have written to him and Absalon in Spanish that I have been learning on Tuesday nights at Minuteman. Education can be a two-way street in more ways than one.

REFLECTION FOR THE DAY

(from the Boston Globe)

Education is the fundamental method of social progress and reform.- John Dewey

As the movie said, Pass It On. This is precisely what we are doing. by Linda Rings

PHILIP BERRIGAN

Surely I would be remiss on this All Saint's Sunday if I didn't mention Philip Berrigan, who died since last All Saints Day. He died last December, two months after being diagnosed with liver and kidney cancer. Here was a saint who spent nearly 40 years resisting war and violence, 11 of which he was in prison as a result of his prophetic witness. He believed so profoundly that the goodness of God could be among the living, that he gave his life to dismantling those things which interfered in any way with peace on earth.

His comments, in a final statement, issued in the days before his death said: "I die with the conviction that nuclear weapons are the scourge of the earth; to mine for them, manufacture them, deploy them, use them, is a curse against God, the human family and earth itself.

Ah yes! A saint is one who embraces the vision that all of God's creation is good and that God is among us, encouraging and inspiring us to embrace the goodness of abundant life. Philip Berrigan was such a saint.

From a Sermon by Rev. Susan Morrison

For the Outreach Committee by Bill Santelmann

Worship Workshop with Pastor George Walters-Sleyon

Lexington UMC will host a worship workshop on Saturday, January 31, 2004 from 1:30-4:00 pm (snowdate: February 1, 5:00 - 7:30 pm). Pastor George Walters-Sleyon will facilitate the workshop and will demonstrate the importance of *Cultivating Harmony in Worship through Music and Liturgy*.

The goals of the workshop will be:

- to discover worship in praise music
- to cultivate a blended worship
- to experiment with different forms of music in worship
- to cultivate "congregational-music" in worship
- to discover growth and spirituality in multiple musical forms in worship.



A variety of musical expressions will be shared including contemporary, spiritual, classical, jazz and gospel. A \$5.00 contribution per participant will be appreciated. United Methodist Churches in the area are being invited to this event.

Pastor Walters-Sleyon is a gospel artist and a praise and worship leader. He is also a third year Master of Divinity student at Boston University School of Theology. He is originally from Liberia, West Africa where he served as pastor leading worship services through music in congregational singing. Since coming to the United States four years ago, George has conducted musical concerts and workshops on praise and worship in several other parts of the country. He is the past director of the African Worship Renewal Project made possible by a grant from the Lily Endowment.



Thank you!!!

- Thank you to John and Ione Garing for the four beautiful wreaths that have decorated our front doors throughout the Advent and Christmas seasons.
- Special thanks to Ken and Jean Baker for providing a new Christmas tree for the Advent and Christmas seasons.
- Many thanks to all those who assisted in decorating the Sanctuary during this holiday season.
- Many thanks to the newsletter collation team for the past year of work!

"We Are Family" Interfaith Celebration

Sunday, January 11, 2004
4:00 pm at Follen Church

On Sunday, January 11 at 4:00 pm, there will be an interfaith celebration held at Follen Church in support of the Lexington Respecting Differences coalition and its mission. This celebration, titled "We Are Family," will consist of song, prayer and personal remarks that will lift up and raise people's awareness of the diversity inherent in what it means to be a family today. The celebration will be inclusive of adoptive families, single parent families, families of re-marriage, families with special needs children or adults, gay and lesbian headed families, interracial families, and the extended families of our faith communities, to name a few. The spectrum of what it means to be a family is wide, and so is the love that binds them together.

Lay participants from several Lexington families will share their thoughts on what they celebrate about their family, and an interfaith choir, led by the No Fault Singers, will also sing. The celebration is being planned by lay leaders and clergy of Hancock United Church of Christ, Temple Isaiah, Temple Emunah, Pilgrim Congregational Church, Lexington United Methodist Church, Follen Church and First Parish Unitarian Universalist Church. Refreshments and fellowship will follow and there will be childcare for the youngest children. For more information, please call Hancock Church at 781-862-4220 and ask for Dan.

Active Parenting Now Class

Woburn UMC; Jan. 7 - Feb. 11

The United Methodist Church of Woburn, will offer *Active Parenting Now*, a wonderful course for parents of children aged 4-12, from 6:30 to 8:30 pm on Wednesday evenings, January 7 through February 11, 2004. Among other skills, participants will learn to use non-violent discipline techniques, to improve communication, to teach responsibility and respect, to defuse power struggles, and to stimulate independence. Cost: \$30 per family, including book. Scholarship help is available, and child care can be arranged. Call Rev. Leslie Hastings at the church, 781-935-6824, for additional information and registration.