MIZPAH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST DECEMBER MESSENGER
412 FIFTH AVENUE NORTH. HOPKINS, MINNESOTA 55343 952.935.5509

A MONTH OF SUNDAYS

Where did the year go? With the coming of meteorological winter we continue the church season of Advent, culminating with our celebration of Christmas. Our Advent theme, taken from Isaiah, is "We are the clay and you, O Lord, are our potter." May your Advent and Christmas seasons be filled with blessing and delight!

Sunday, December 4: Key passage – Isaiah 40:1-11; Lord's Supper (pew)

Sunday, December 11 marks our annual Senior Choir Christmas Program.

Sunday, December 18: abbreviated Lord's Day service, followed immediately by our Annual Children's Christmas Program and Happy Birthday Jesus cake.

Saturday, December 24: Enjoy our annual Family Christmas at Mizpah at 4:00 and our annual Christmas Candlelight Service at 11:00 pm. Bell Choir play at the Candlelight Service!

On Sunday, December 25, Christmas Day, Rev. Al Fiene will lead a brief Lord's Day service and carol sing.

Sunday, January 1: Epiphany Sunday (Epiphany is Friday, January 6); Lord's Supper (around the table); key passage – Ephesians 3:1-12

PRAYER CONCERNS

Patrick Kidder and Peggy Jensen were both resident at Chapel View Health Care during the month, following injuries suffered at home. Pat remains; Peggy has been discharged to home. Please pray as well for our homebound members and favor them with calls, visits and Christmas cards.

Wishing you the gift of faith,
the blessing of hope and
the peace of Christ's love
at Christmas and always.

Pastor Steve Thom, Nancy Johnsen, Bryan Fisher, Marla Nelson, Rick Kartak

I'VE BEEN THINKING … about Jesus.

Here's a second installment, of three, of my biography of Jesus.

Jesus' personality and message were compelling to people of all walks of life, all social strata. He began to gather followers, who sought to learn from him in an intense, intimate way and to share his chosen lifestyle, as well as, his ministry of preaching, teaching and healing. Whether these followers self-selected, joining Jesus' traveling band purely on their own initiative or were recruited by him cannot be determined accurately. The Gospels assert both methods of joining and that seems convincing enough. *At some point Jesus, and perhaps his disciples, established a sort of home base in the village of Capernaum*, on the north shore of Lake Galilee. Jesus' ministry featured no apparent program or planning. It seems that he simply wandered about Galilee following the dictates of his conscience, responding to circumstances, especially the apparent and expressed needs of people.

As to Jesus own, personal religious practice a few things can be reliably known. **He was a reasonably observant Jew**, *a Pharisee*. **He attended synagogue services**. **He prayed regularly and fervently to YHWH, the God of Israel, whom he,** as many Jews and Christians before and after, **called "Father" (Aramaic "Abba")**. *He sometimes "bent the rules," e.g., he conducted the "work" of his ministry on the Sabbath*. About Jesus social outlook a few things can also be known or inferred with some reliability. He associated with people from social classes beneath and above his own. He associated with women to whom he was not related (and his mother, of course!). He associated with people in disfavored trades, such as prostitutes, shepherds and tax collectors. *He questioned or even rejected the notion that Jews were YHWH's "chosen people" in the sense of conferring exclusive privilege. He openly questioned, even protested, the Roman occupation of Galilee and Judea. He openly questioned the religious establishment, notably the perquisites and practices of the Jerusalem Temple priesthood.* He may have felt, or even expressed the opinion, that the High Priesthood served the needs of the Roman occupation more than the needs of the Jewish people.

I question the Gospels' assertion that Jesus thought of or described himself as Messiah. He was after all a Jew and knew perfectly well that he and his career as an itinerant sage in no way resembled that of King David, model for the Messiah to come. I also question the Gospels' assertion that Jesus described himself as "son of Adam," other than to emphasize the commonality he felt with other people. Of course, *others, including his own disciples, may have thought of or described Jesus as Messiah during his lifetime*. And I find it plausible that Jesus thought of himself as a prophet in the mold of Amos: yearning and perhaps agitating for just government and purified religion.

At least once during his 18-24 month itinerant ministry Jesus traveled from Galilee to Jerusalem. Why he did so and at what time of year are not precisely known. Could he have gone to the Holy City to protest the Roman occupation, or the High Priesthood, or the unsavory connections between the two? Could he have simply gone as a pilgrim, or to celebrate a Jewish holiday? The Gospels assert that his fateful trip to the Holy City, during which he was killed, occurred in the spring, at Passover time. Surely this is plausible. Still, it should be regarded skeptically because of the "supersessionist" bent of the Gospels, noted above. **Some of Jesus' followers accompanied him on this fateful journey**. **Jesus taught and preached in Jerusalem. His subject, as always, was the immanent nature of God's Imperial Rule.** In that place and time this was perceived by the Roman authorities – and may have been intended by Jesus – as outright insurrection. Additionally, he engaged then and there in one or more overt acts of protest against the practices of the High Priesthood. *The overturning of the Temple money changers' tables may have been that protest.*

Please bring in a poinsettia to decorate the sanctuary this Christmas. Please bring your poinsettia in anytime before December 11. You can have it back on or after Christmas Day. A couple of volunteers are needed to keep them alive during this season. *Please!*

WELCOME

Welcome, welcome

Isn't it a nice feeling to have someone welcome you to a new place? That's what our Mizpah Welcomers do each Sunday. We greet visitors, provide a name tag, encourage them to sign our guest book, and try to connect them with a current member. Got kids? You should meet... Do you know about our Sunday School program? All children are invited, and to the Children's Time as well. In your golden years? Do you know we have a very active seniors group? Let me introduce you to....

You don't have to know everyone or everything about Mizpah. Just offer a genuine, smiling, "Welcome to Mizpah!" Be sure to tell them that we have the best church coffee anywhere! And it's free!

Currently we have about 12 individuals or pairs that rotate Sundays, so you're only "on' about 4 times a year. We could use a few more regulars and a few willing to act as substitutes as needed.

I am inviting YOU to join the Mizpah Welcomers. Please contact me at grout98@aol.com or 952-541-1261 to sign up. A new schedule for 2012 will go out mid- December, so please sign up now!

Thanks! *Sue Scully*

A big **thank you** to all who participated in the **Mission 1** food drive and contributed to the Neighbors in Need Offering. The final count for Mizpah was 628 pounds of food and $648 to the Neighbors in Need Offering.

As of 11/20/11 the numbers from the National office were:

Goal - 1 million lbs of food	Received	-	1, 392,085 lbs.
Goal - 11,111 Letters to Officials	"	-	336,844 letters sent
Goal - Neighbors In Need $111,111	"	-	$109.283
Goal - East Africa food drive $111,111	"	-	$105,588

Thank you also to Tom Nelson who helped weigh the food bags and to Willy Arnold who delivered the food to ICA. It takes many hands to complete a project.

Our Church's Wider Mission Task Force

Ladies, Ladies

ICA Birthday Bag project: Cake Mix, Frosting, Candles - small gift for girl or boy - see Pat Prudlo.

We met on November 8th - ALL 3 of us - 9:30 A.M. - Fellowship Hall. Dorothy Pavelka attended and brought a few memorable pieces from the 'Heuser' years, hopefully they will be displayed. Thanks, Dorothy. At this date the Bake Sale/Attic Treasures will have happened and NOW we can say THANKS to all who contributed AND purchased the items displayed, THANKS to Nancy for spreading the word. As aforementioned the proceeds will go to the installation of new carpeting in the Fellowship Hall and entry area.

Soup and Sandwich menu for December 6th offers Corn Chowder, BLT Sandwiches, coffee and cookie - ALL for $5.00 adults $2.50 for children - 11:00 to 1:00. JOIN US!

The next **Ladies, Ladies** meeting will be held on December 13th - 9:30 A.M. - Fellowship Hall - the projects we initiate and perform 'earn' revenue for the improvement of our 'precious' Mizpah. Why not be a part of this 'good feeling' endeavor!

The Minnetonka Choral Society presents it's 2011 Holiday concert
"A Guitar for Christmas"

When the organ in the Oberndorff village church in the Tyrolean Alps of Austria broke down on Christmas Eve, 1818, the church's priest and organist created a new carol with simple chords that could be played on a guitar. Since Silent Night was born that night, the guitar has played an ever-growing role in music for the holidays.

Minnesota's premiere guitarist Jeffrey Van joins the Choral Society in a garland of carols for chorus and guitar, including several of his own creation, from his bouncy Manger Dance to his lovely Christmas Lullaby. And yes, we'll all sing Silent Night together as it was originally offered, with guitar.

Sunday, December 11th at 3pm
St. Therese Catholic Church of Deephaven
18323 Minnetonka Blvd
Deephaven, MN 55391

Ticket $18 for adults - $10 for students (17 and younger) Available at the door or directly from MCS members Mary Speerschneider or Tom Nelson

Coming Up:

January 22, 2012 Taste of Mizpah

The YOUth Fundraising Annual Event, Taste of Mizpah, will have a few new surprises this year.

February 14, 2012 Babysitting by the YOUth 5:30-8:30 p.m.

A Valentine party for the kids while you take your valentine out to dinner.

February TBA, Trivia Twist

This year we will be combining parts of the annual progressive dinner with a trivia night at Mizpah. This adults-only event will be in February, but the exact date is to be determined. Details still need to be firmed up, but there will be an entrance fee, teams will be assigned by draw, half the entrance fee will go to prizes and half will begin to fund Mizpah's 125th Anniversary celebration in 2013. Each participant will be asked to bring a food dish to share (appetizer, soup/chili/stew, or dessert). There will be appetizer, a round of trivia, soup, another round of trivia, dessert, another round of trivia, clean up, and then the first and second place teams will be announced.

Volunteers who aren't interested in the trivia portion are welcome to help set up, serve, tally, etc.

Watch for more details in late Dec./early January.

December 2011

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 Replay 3:30 Loaves & Fishes 4:15	**2**	**3** 10-1 Gift Making Day Babysitting 1-5 AA intergroup 9-11 Sanctuary
4 Coffee w/SGT 9 Worship 10 Church School	**5**	**6** Fix it Crew 9 SOUP lunch 11-1 Council 7 p.m.	**7** Bible Study 10 Handbells 6 Choir 7	**8**	**9**	**10** Choir Rehearsal AA intergroup 9-11
11 Coffee w/SGT 9 Worship 10 Church School Choir Program Confirmation	**12**	**13** Fix it Crew 9	**14** Bible Study 10 Mizpah Fellowship Dinner 5:30	**15**	**16**	**17** Gathering 9-10:30 discussing "Stand Like Mountain, Flow like Water" AA intergroup 9-11
18 Coffee w/SGT 9 Worship 10 Christmas Pageant Birthday Cake for Jesus	**19** Messenger Deadline Combined Boards	**20** Fix it Crew 9	**21** Bible Study 10 Handbells 6	**22**	**23**	**24** **Family Service 4** **Candlelight Service 11 p.m.** AA intergroup 9-11
25 Worship 10 	**26**	**27** Fix it Crew 9 Stewardship	**28** Mail Messenger	**29**	**30**	**31** AA intergroup 9-11

December Birthdays

3 Coqui Conkey, Josie Pettygrove, Andy Davis 4 Nancy Johnsen 6 Sarah Conkey 9 Mary Erickson, Chris Heikkila 10 Marlene Running, Ann Dolina 11 Emma Woodyard 12 Duffy Bren 13 Bud Weaver, Kristin Kusche 14 Dru Meese, Steve Nelson 15 Chuck Speerschneider 16 Racheal Scully, Kate Jenny 23 Pat Kidder 24 Kelly Cleveland 26 Tessa Anfinson 29 John Hedberg 30 Leighton Lunetta 31 Connie Kusche, Mark Scully, Tom Gomez

You can make this Holiday Season a little brighter for a child in our community!

Toy Chest 2011

Now - Dec 19th

We are now accepting donations of new unwrapped toys.

Toys are given to children in our community
who qualify for the free/reduced school lunch program.

Examples of toys donated to Toy Chest over the years:

Ages 0 - 4
Toy Tool Sets
Fischer Price Toys
See & Say Toys
Musical Toys
Tyco Toys
Educational Play Sets
Duplo Play Sets
Wooden Block Sets
Books

Ages 5 - 10
Multicultural Dolls
Tonka Trucks
Art & Craft Sets
Sporting Goods
Model or Construction Sets
Science Kits / Sporting Items
Educational Play Sets
DVDs / Board Games
Books

Ages 11 - 18
CDs / DVDs / Video Games
CD Players / Electronics
Jewelry / Books
Sporting Items
Sport's Team Apparel
Board Games
Digital Cameras
Ridgedale Mall Gift Cards
Target/Best Buy Gift Cards

Toy Chest is collecting donated toys through December 19th.
The average price of a donated toy is $10 - $25.
Distribution of toys to the families is Dec 19th - Dec 23rd.

Thinking about volunteering?
Many volunteer opportunities exist ~ please contact Rosemaris: (952) 988-5352

** ***Cash Donations Welcomed*** **

ResourceWest
Connecting and Strengthening Community