

## The Desert Disciple: e-Letter December 15, 2011

### From your Interim Minister:

Last night was our third of a six part Advent-Epiphany series in which we watch a documentary about Deitrich Bonhoeffer and read and reflect on his Advent devotions that were written while he was in prison for standing against the Nazification of the church in Germany. As usual, our discussion was spirited and deep. This week, the theme was “guilt” and those who attended arrived with a lot to say! I asked one group member, Rev. Mary Alice Do, to write down her reflection that so moved everyone. I hope you will catch a glimpse of the Christ child dancing in and through her words. It was a holy evening:

*I thought the good news was that if I repented, was baptized and tried to live a good life by obeying the rules, then God would save me. I struggled to understand how this could be grace, and I was told it was because I still did not deserve God’s love. It didn't seem like this was a gift but a transaction. And that is one thing that makes God's grace cheap. It is believing that by doing something we can have it. Another thing that makes it cheap is not responding to it. Not that it truly becomes cheap. A diamond doesn't become cheap if we treat it like glass. And God's gift does not truly become cheap if we think we can earn it or can ignore it. God's grace wasn't cheap. It was costly and it costs us also. God's gift is that we are loved. We are loved so completely and totally that there is nothing we need to do. In fact, we can turn our backs on it and still have it. We can be full of deserved guilt and still be completely loved with no condemnation. We do not need to be afraid of God or Judgment, when we realize this amazing gift. When we truly see it, we cannot help (unless we are deficient in some way) but respond by wanting to love others as we have been loved. And in doing so, we also enter into the guilt and take it on.*

*Does this mean there is no wrong or right or that God does not care about justice? I don't think so. I think God cares a great deal about right and wrong and justice. I just don't think guilt is God's tool. God turns the world on its head and brings justice by loving us. By becoming a baby to poor parents who were disenfranchised, the world is turned upside down. When we turn around and love that baby and love that baby's family, then we bring justice into the world.*

*I am sure that this is not altogether right. Some people may need to feel guilty to do what is right. Maybe God is willing for people to do what is right for any reason. But guilt does not inspire people to love. It may cause repentance but it doesn't inspire someone to love. Only being loved inspires us to love. We learn about what is right and wrong so we can better love as we have been loved. The good news is that we are so completely and totally loved by God that God shares our guilt.*

Mary Alice Do, 12/14/11

Stay tuned for our Lenten study group that will run from Wednesday, February 22nd to April 4. The book we will be studying is “Saving Jesus from the Church: How to Stop Worshipping Christ and Start Following Jesus.”

Blessings on your holy-day preparations. Traveling mercies for you or loved ones who will be traveling during Christmas. Remember Christmas morning will be a hymn sing and everyone is invited to wear their PJs.

See you in church!

Delle

**IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY:**

**REV. McCORMICK CAN BE REACHED AT (520) 204-6295**

## Important Upcoming Dates!

Please mark the following dates in your calendar:

- December 18<sup>th</sup> @ Noon** – Elder’s Meeting in the Parlor  
 @ **Noon** – Christmas Luncheon in Fellowship Hall  
 @ **3:00pm** – Christmas Caroling to ‘shut-in’ members
- December 20<sup>th</sup> @ 6:00pm** – Holy-Holiday Series III – Blue Christmas in the Chapel
- December 21<sup>st</sup> @ 6:00pm** – “God is in the Manger” Study led by Rev. McCormick
- December 23<sup>rd</sup> @ 4:00pm** – Children’s Pageant Rehearsal in the Sanctuary
- December 24<sup>th</sup> @ 6:30pm** – Christmas Eve Family Service w/ Children’s Pageant
- December 24<sup>th</sup> @ 11:00pm** – Christmas Eve Traditional Candle-light Service
- December 25<sup>th</sup> @ 10:30am** – Christmas Day: Worship Service (Come in your Pajama’s)
- December 26<sup>th</sup> – Church Office Closed ☺**



## Annual Christmas Caroling:



The choir invites you to join in the Annual Christmas Caroling this **Sunday, December 18<sup>th</sup> @ 3:00pm**. Every year a group of people get together and go Christmas Caroling to the ‘shut-in’ members. This is a great way to spread the holiday cheer to our members who cannot be with us on Sunday’s.

## Holy Holiday Series III – Blue Christmas!



Christmas time can be distressing. It may be a Christmas without a loved one; it may be a time that has always been difficult. It may be that you simply long for an alternative to a spirituality of consumption and false cheer.

The constant refrain about the happiness of the season and getting together with loved ones, reminds many people of what they have lost or never had.

The long nights leave us alone with our own thoughts too much and we long for days of warmth and sunshine. The anguish of broken relationships, the insecurity of unemployment, the weariness of ill health, the pain of isolation – all these can make us feel very alone in the midst of the celebrating and spending. We need a space to acknowledge our sadness, concerns and pain; we need to know we are not alone. Perhaps you are not in pain this

year but know someone who is. This is an opportunity to reach out and bring others into the manger to experience the birth of God anew.

First Christian Church offers a special Blue Christmas service in the chapel on **Tuesday, December 20<sup>th</sup> from 6:00 to 7:15pm**. Please join us in sharing, prayers, scripture and music that acknowledge God’s presence with, in and around us even, and perhaps especially, in the times when we least feel or know it. We will conclude the service with communion and a ritual of healing and blessing.

Everyone, regardless of church background (or lack of it) is welcome. Come as you are and know that, no matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here!

## Children's Pageant Rehearsal



We will hold a Rehearsal for the Children on **Friday, December 23<sup>rd</sup> at 4:00pm**. We invite all the children to participate. The children will be performing on Saturday, Christmas Eve during the Family Service at 6:30pm.

To the left is a photo of our Angel Choir from last year.

## Christmas Eve & Day Services:



- \* Saturday, Christmas Eve (12/24):  
**6:30pm:** Family Service with Angel Choir and Children's Pageant.  
**11:00pm:** Traditional Candlelight Service with Refreshments afterwards.
- \* Sunday, Christmas Day (12/25):  
**10:30am:** Pajama Worship Service and Hymn Singing. We will also be collecting gift cards for New Beginnings for Women & Children.

## Notes from Sally Van Slyke:



Tucson is alive with the sounds of Christmas Music. Our members have been busy sharing their talents with the community. Janet Tolman has had a very busy month so far, playing with the orchestra for the 35<sup>th</sup> Messiah Community Sing-in. George was in the front row enthusiastically enjoying and singing with the 1,000 community singers. Janet is also accompanying the Boys Chorus & the Sons of Orpheus at the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual San Xavier candlelight concerts. Raymond always loved singing and playing at these concerts, even playing a greensleaves prelude.

Many thanks to David Gale and our Choir for their beautiful anthems and organizing the annual caroling to our shut in members. Also, Sara Van Slyke and daughter, Amelia, will be performing four Zuzi shows this coming weekend.

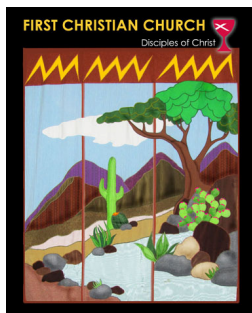
## Celebrations & Concerns:

- Vivian Cox has moved to La Canada Care Center – 7970 N. La Canada Dr, Room #406 – Tucson, AZ 85704. Her Room Phone Number is 877-5756.
- Asking for your prayers and expressions of condolences to Judy Bodnaruk (Tucson CWU President) whose mother, Pat Allen, died a few days ago. A memorial service will be held at St. Paul's United Methodist Church, 8051 E. Broadway, next Thursday (Dec. 22) at 11 a.m.
- Debbie Hammond found a place to live. ☺ She is grateful to the church for everything we've done to help her. She had found that she is in need of some things for her room: dish drainer, tall garbage can, a mixing bowl, toaster, frying pan, sauce pan, toaster oven, dresser, twin bed, and twin sheets. If you can donate any of these items, please contact Mary Alice Do @ 440-3276 or you can always call the Church Office.

## **4 Bedroom House for Rent (Price Reduced!)**

If you know anyone looking for a new place, please refer them to the property management company, Casa Vista Properties (742-1477). The house 1036 N. 1<sup>st</sup> Ave is a 4 bedroom/2 bath. Washer & Dryer hook ups are available. A stove and refrigerator is included in the kitchen and spacious living and dining area, all for only **\$1,300/month**. ☺

## **CHECK OUT THE WEBSITE: [www.firstchristianchurchtucson.org](http://www.firstchristianchurchtucson.org)**



This website is becoming a great resource! If you haven't typed the web address into your browser, you need to! Some pages are still being constructed, but I promise you'll love the new site and the progress that has been made!

The church calendar is now available to view from our website. And not only is the time and title of event listed, but also a brief description of the event/meeting/etc.

You can also find AUDIO Recordings of Rev. McCormick's sermons each week.

\* Don't forget to check out our Facebook page, too!!

## **Bea Kimberlin's Moment for Mission and Ministry**

### **Sunday, December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011**



"Pastor Delle has asked me to talk a little about the **history and purpose of the Chrismon Christmas tree in our narthex:**

In 1956 Frances K. Spencer noticed the Christmas tree in her local church, the Lutheran Church of the Ascension in Danville, Virginia; it was the usual sort of Christmas tree, decorated with colored lights and balls. Even though she was a semi-professional at creating new and unusual Christmas trees, she had taken no part in decorating the tree at church because she had been brought up to believe that decorated trees are strictly part of our secular celebration of Christmas and have no place in church; so, even though many contemporary American churches, including her own, were putting up trees in their worship buildings, she ignored them as being out of place. However, the Spirit moved her in 1956 to notice the tree in her church and appreciate the members who had given their time and effort to decorate the tree as an offering to God for the purpose of making their church more beautiful for the Advent and Christmas seasons.

She realized that because she, who had a real talent for decorating Christmas trees, had been unwilling to participate in this project, her congregation was not making the full offering to God it could make in this regard. Therefore, in the spring of 1957, Frances volunteered to decorate the church Christmas tree that year, and the pastor accepted her offer. She had no specific ideas or plans except to try, with the ability God had given her, to create something more suitable for use in the church. Realizing that the church celebrates Christmas as the birthday of the Christ Child, she did research to find a way to decorate a tree in honor of Christ. In this process she discovered some

drawings of designs called chrisma (plural), chrismon (singular). “**Chrismon**” is a contraction of the two words CHRISt and MONogram. By definition a chrismon is a design based on the Chi Rho monogram of Christ (Chi and Rho are the first two letters in the Greek word for Christ).

Ascension Lutheran Church adopted the word “chrismon” to designate the special Christmas tree decorations that Mrs. Spencer and other members of the church designed that were all based on chrisma. Over the years they developed ornaments incorporating many other signs and symbols from early Christian art. The one requirement is that these ornaments refer symbolically to Jesus Christ, God, and our Christian faith. Over the years the Chrismon Christmas tree in the Church of the Ascension became so beautiful with all of its lovely white and gold ornaments, that people in other churches wanted instructions for making the same kind of ornaments for their trees. Eventually Frances K. Spencer wrote a series of books on the subject with explanations, patterns, and directions and assigned the copyrights on these books to Ascension Lutheran Church so that she has never profited personally from sharing this idea with other churches, and when Ascension Lutheran Church grants other churches the right to use their copyrighted material, it is always with the understanding that Chrismons are never to be made for sale but only to speak of our Lord and God and for the glory of God.

All Chrismons are made in combinations of white and gold because they are the liturgical colors for Christmas. White refers to Christ’s purity and perfection; gold refers to God’s majesty and glory. We point to Christ as the Light of the world by using tiny white lights on the tree.

I had never seen nor heard of Chrismons until sometime in the 1980s in the church in Bisbee where Larry was the pastor for 17 years. One of our members there was the wife of a colonel at Ft. Huachuca; they and their family had lived in many places and had seen Chrismons in other churches. One day she invited the woman who was education director for the post chapels at Ft. Huachuca to talk about Chrismons with our congregational women’s fellowship and bring samples from the post chapel for us to see. I was very interested; I got Larry to order the Chrismon books for us, and I got together a small group of women to help me make a few of the Chrismons; that first year we had enough to decorate a small table tree in our fellowship room. The next year I made enough to decorate the large tree our church put up in the sanctuary every year plus enough to decorate 12 large wreaths that were used for our beautiful hanging of the greens service every year.

Grant, Larry, and I put our membership back in this church the Sunday after Mother’s Day in 1994; Rev. Mary Workman put her membership back here the same Sunday. In the fall of 1994 Larry was teaching the Through-the-Bible Class for adults, which met Sunday mornings in the parlor. For Advent that year Pastor Nobu Kaneko asked every church school class to decorate the door of its classroom for Christmas. I made enough small-size Chrismons to decorate a wreath, which we placed on the wooden door that entered the parlor from the east until the Estes family redid the parlor a few years ago. Roberta Kaneko admired my wreath and found out that I had made hundreds of Chrismons in Bisbee. In 1995 she asked me to make enough Chrismons to decorate a large tree in our narthex. In September I ordered material from an art supply store in the eastern part of the country, one that specializes in Chrismons and bought what I could from our local Michael’s store. I

worked eight hours a day all that fall in order to make enough Chrismons for our church tree; Grant and Larry did all our housekeeping and cooking and laundry.

I've helped to decorate the narthex tree every year since 1995 except for one year when I was too ill to help, and I've seen to it that the Chrismons are properly handled and stored each year. In the early years of our Chrismon tree, Joan Darnell, Ruth Manning, and Margaret Damgar helped my family and me with the tree each year. After they were no longer able to help, many other church members have helped me in recent years, and I am very grateful to them all. This year my helpers were Jean and Willis Jackson, Jean Bronson, Pam Spears, Patti and Ron Lemke, and Sara and Larry, my daughter and son."

