

The Grapevine



The Newsletter of Shaughnessy Heights United Church

Vol 4; Issue 4: December 2003

God's Day Is Coming

Dear Friends:

"And that's the real meaning of Christmas...."

We hear this sentence frequently at this time of year. Sometimes it is marketers trying to convince us to buy yet another thing to express our love. But most often it is people who intuit that underlying the Christmas story is divine energy for peace, love, joy and hope for the entire world.

In that quaint, beloved story of the baby born in Bethlehem's stable – with the animals representing the rest of God's creation, we get a glimpse into the heart of God. The innocent, helpless child in the manger is, for Christians, "Lord" and "Son of God" (contradicting the Roman emperor's exclusive claim to these titles).

In poverty and homelessness, Jesus comes to reveal God's reign and to affirm our humanity as the children of God. As University of Oregon theologian Marcus Borg writes in his timely interpretation of *The Heart of Christianity*, "in this person [Jesus] we see the revelation of God.... He is both metaphor and sacrament of God." (p.99)

Christians do not sentimentalize this birth of Jesus as a kind of museum piece to venerate. We take heart from this amazing self-revelation of God as affirmation of our lives and inspiration for our hopes. In a world beset by brokenness and suffering, God's message in Jesus is that love – divine love – is with us (Emmanuel) to heal and eventually re-unite creation. God's day of love, justice and peace will come as people of faith commit themselves to authentic humanity - the Christ way of self-giving and compassion!

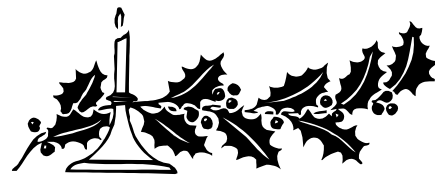
You are invited to be part of the joyful worship services to mark the Incarnation of God (*see schedule on page two*).

Even more, we are all invited to renew faith in the God who comes among us as vulnerable love. The world is dying for want of enough people deeply imbued with the Spirit of Christ and God's vision of a world transformed.

"When the incarnation, like leaven in the dough, has worked its way all through the human race, the global village or world community will no longer be a dream but a reality." (Delia Smith, *A Journey into God*, Hodder & Stoughton 1988, p. 118).

Shaughnessy Heights United Church is one of many faith communities responding to make God's dream a reality. Will you celebrate by re-committing your whole self to this Good News for all peoples? May God's blessings in this holy season fill all homes and warm all hearts.

HO



**To members, adherents, and friends of
Shaughnessy Heights United Church**

***Merry Christmas and joy in the New
Year from the Staff***

*Janet, Christine, Harold, Roy, Cathy P.,
Cathy C., Ross, Harry*

Mission Development

Special Christmas Gift

Many SHUC participants take the opportunity at this time of year to make a special contribution for the congregation's life and work. The enclosed envelope makes it easy.

Your gift can help ensure that the congregation's programs are sustained; that commitments to the Mission & Service Fund and the larger church family are honoured; and that the accumulated deficit is decreased by a 2003 surplus.

If you haven't contributed yet this year, please remember that the SHUC's continuing presence in the community depends on you and all SHUC households giving regularly and generously. With approximately 375 participating households, on average it costs over \$1000 per SHUC household to sustain the congregation's various ministries.

All contributions received by December 31 will be credited to the 2003 taxation year.

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Circle of Elders

This is an exciting and important initiative for the life and work of our congregation.

The Circle of Elders (COE) will be an advisory group that meets 3 or more times a year to pray for the well-being of the congregation, consider issues and offer advice to council or the congregation. Elders may be members or adherents who demonstrate a strong commitment to this congregation's mission, deeply rooted in faith and bring the wisdom of experience to this Circle of 12. The term 'Elder' does not necessarily reflect age but more a respectful term for 'Wise- One'.

We are asking you to submit the names of potential members of the Circle of Elders to Noralyn Smiley, Dawna Claxton, Ian Paterson or to our Ministers. Council hopes to have the Congregation approve the Circle's members at our General Meeting in February and celebrate its beginning.

For more information please look for the proposed mandate for the COE on the Council's Bulletin Board.

*Dawna Claxton
Vice Chair Mission Development*

Worship Schedule

Wednesday Evening Worship:

6:45 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. in the Chapel.

Prayers, Readings and Communion. No service Dec. 31.

Dec. 21: **Christmas Sunday Worship** – 10 a.m.
Pre-service carols at 9:55.

Dec. 24: **Christmas Eve Services:**
4:30 pm: Children's Service–Nativity Pageant
7:30 pm: Family Service – Four Choirs
11:00 pm: Candlelight Communion Service –
Sanctuary Choir

Dec. 28: **Worship to end the year.** First Sunday
after Christmas – 10 am

Jan. 4: **Communion** at 10 am

Jan 11: **Morning Worship** at 10 am

Jan. 18: **Morning Worship** at 10 am

Jan. 25: **Morning Worship** at 10 am – Baptism

(Nursery care, children's & youth circles at 10 am
Sunday worship)

Baptism & Adult Membership

Baptism will be celebrated on January 25th. Participating parents wishing to have children baptized and adults seeking membership are invited to contact the office or one of the ministers about this sacrament. The next following baptism of children will take place on the last Sunday of February.

Advertisement:

Greeting / Note Cards with an image from a painting of SHUC Pentecost Window are available from Paul Saxon.

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Mission Development

Youth Ministry

“When the incarnation, like leaven in the dough, has worked its way all through the human race, the global village...will no longer be dream but a reality.” You have already read this great quote in Harry’s article. To me, it speaks in part of bridging the world of youth and adults.

SHUC Youth launched the Advent season for us on Nov. 30. They presented their ideas about ‘waiting’. They picked music that reflected their world (*Smells like Teen Spirit, by Nirvana*). Each one added emphasis and inflection to the basic text. I wondered, “Where did this feeling come from?” I realized that the power of friends being together is Incarnation. Friends make the gospel real. The message is one of acceptance and of direction. “We are going somewhere. We are on our way!”

Recently, a former congregational member from Alberta called to say his son was in trouble here in Vancouver. Would I see him? Naturally, I wanted to support an old friend and I was curious to see the young adult, who was four years old the last time I knew him.

I replied that his son would decide whether or not we got together. When his dad reported back to me on their conversation his son replied that he “Didn’t want any religion shoved down his neck.” It is very important to understand this sentiment for today it is everywhere.

In my conversations with youth and youth workers I am coming to understand that the phrase: “Don’t shove religion down my neck” does not mean, “go away.” It does not mean religion is awful. It does not mean anyone with religion is bigoted. It does mean a wish for mutual respect. It does mean that youth sense they have as much to give to you, as they have to receive it from you.

Incarnation is something practiced daily at Shaughnessy and I can see the result in the youth themselves. They are part of the village here because they feel respected. I am confident the spirit of Christ will only grow stronger and stronger through the programs youth engage in here. In January, that will include Tuesday evening confirmation classes, mentor-relationships, retreats at Camp Fircom, and more youth offerings in the services.

By the way, lunch and fine conversation was had with the expatriate Albertan and suspected “religion-shover” in question. They both look forward to more.

Ross White

Notes from Council

Have you noticed the new bulletin boards? Please watch for Council minutes and more. We're trying hard to improve our communication.

At the last Council meeting we approved two new advisory groups. The *Circle of Elders* will be composed of twelve wise persons from our congregation who will meet three or four times a year with Harry to let us know how we are doing, and what we can do better. The nominating committee will prepare a list of candidates. Please let Dawna Claxton know of anyone you feel should be approached to serve for a term of two or three years. We hope that those who are asked to serve will consider it an honour to do so!

The second group will be a *Minister's Circle*. It will meet three or four times a year and will be composed of the ministerial staff and all of those in the congregation who are or have been clergy.

In the New Year, we will offer second hours on several important subjects. Among these are: a discussion of the relationship between SHUC and our Day Care, and the report of the Stepping Stones Team. The final contract with the KTPC, and the 2004 budget will be presented at a congregational meeting in February.

We are very happy to welcome Nina Matthews as the Council Secretary, and Lois Saad as the new Chair of Pastoral Care. Both will be officially joining the Council in January.

South African Church leader Ross Olivier, keynoter at the Reach Out Conference, spoke to the Council on November 19. He thanked Council, and all of you, for the hospitality shown to him and to Shayne during their whirlwind week with us. He reminded us that the work of the Council is just that, not a casual job, not something we merely fit into our busy lives, but serious work, and that we must be serious about what we do and who we are.

Ross observed that Shaughnessy is a Church of great strengths, blessings, and "incredible human resources." He urged us to be mindful that we are a powerful receptacle of people's dreams and history. There is not enough space here to summarize all of Ross' wisdom. If you would like to see a more detailed report, please let us know. *Blessings and joy of the season to all.*

Noralyn Smiley, Council Chair

Mission Development

Prayers (with action) for the Christmas Season

As the days continue to shorten, we pray for the divine light to shine bright dispersing the darkness, trusting that God's light can never be extinguished. In the Christmas season, we pray that the holy light will brighten many lives. **Pray for:**

- The hungry and the homeless (support the Caring & Sharing Fund)
- The fearful, and in our province, especially those who are terrified they will have no income after April 1, 2004 when social assistance is stopped for many (contact your MLA)
- the children of the world – that all may have a future, and that the threat of hunger, HIV-AIDS, and other diseases may be wiped out (buy a "Beads of Hope" badge)
- armed forces personnel far from home – that peace may come and the return home be possible (send an e-mail of caring to the Department of National Defense)
- all alone in this season of community and festivity; for all grieving loved ones lost (invite someone for lunch or dinner)
- all who work faithfully for the healing, transformation, and blessing of God's world (discern who these people are and encourage them)
- faith communities where the joy of the season overflows (invite a neighbour or relative to participate)
- households where family and friends gather to experience the love of God (eat together, give thanks to God together.)

Ah, dearest Jesus, holy Child,
Make thee a bed, soft, undefiled,
Within my heart, that it may be
A quiet chamber kept for thee.

(Martin Luther -- 1483-1546)

Gracious God, who has poured upon us the new light of your incarnate Word; grant that the same light enkindled in our hearts may shine forth in our lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *(Sarum Rite, alt.)*

HO

Reach Out! Conference... From Charity to Justice

An amazing event involving 35 volunteers and leaders from SHUC, 150 registrants from BC & Washington, blessed with wonderful spirit – that's the bottom line of the Reach Out Conference sponsored by the SHUC Outreach Team and VST's Chalmers Institute on November 14 & 15 at SHUC.

Keynoter Ross Olivier from South Africa moved people with his stories, faith, and vision – both at the conference and in various SHUC groups in the week following. If you participated in any of these gatherings or want to learn more, come to a Second Hour event in the Lounge on Sun. Jan. 11, 11:30-12:30!

Soup and Study 2004

The dates have been set for 2004! Mark **Thursday evenings** from January 22 to February 19 from 5 to 7:30 pm on your calendar.



The focus of this year's study is yet to be finalized, but it will be on Faith Exploration. If you are looking for an evening of good food and engaging conversation, this is the program!

Childcare will be provided. For more information, contact Cathy Cryder at 604-261-6377.

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