

Pilgrim's Progress December 6, 2016 – Vol. 57 No. 10

Here's my final theological reflection from my Sabbatical trip to the Holy Land.

Luke 2:8-9

"In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified."

In the West Bank there is a beautiful city called Beit Sahour, a municipality of Palestine. There one can discover those famous fields outside of Bethlehem where shepherds were living and keeping watch over their flock by night. Unsurprisingly, there's competing claims about the exact location of *the* Shepherds' Field. So naturally one can go to the Orthodox Shepherds' Field or the Catholic Shepherds' Field! In the Orthodox Shepherds' Field the belief is that there's a tomb containing the remains of three of the shepherds to whom the angel announced the birth of Jesus Christ (on the west side of the Cave Church.)

Our group went to the Catholic Shepherds' Field on the north ridge of Beit Sahour (an area called Siyar-el-Ghanam (Place for Keeping Sheep.)) In the Catholic Shepherds' Field, there's the Chapel of the Angels designed by Italian architect Antonio Barluzzi. It's a beautiful church built in the shape of a tent that permits natural light to shower the sanctuary in glowing rays of sunshine. It feels as if you are seeing the "glory of the Lord" as Luke wrote. The acoustics are incredible and when a group sings (our group sang a rousing rendition of "Silent Night"), it sounds as if there really is an angel chorus present. When you look around the walls of the sanctuary, there are paintings that depict the angel's announcement to the shepherds, the shepherds paying homage to Jesus, and the shepherds celebrating the birth of Jesus. The Chapel of the Angels stands over a cave in which the shepherds are believed to have lived.

It's moving to be in this beautiful space and it honestly was one of the most peaceful holy sites we visited. We were given time to explore the grounds and to contemplate the Gospel story of the shepherds keeping watch over their flock by night. At its heart, it's a story about God's presence felt among the poor and lowly--people who were on the outside looking in as they cared for their sheep in the fields outside of Bethlehem. It's a story about God sometimes breaking through (the blazing light of God's presence and power) to make God's love known to ordinary people like you and me. It's a story about that constant refrain in the Bible: "do not be afraid." For God is with us, the presence of God can sustain us, and nothing can separate us from the love of God!



Wishing you Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love in this holy season of Advent,

Lauren



The Advent and Christmas Season at Pilgrim Church

December 11	Sunday	10:30 am	THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT Service on the theme of Joy “Angels from the Realms of Glory”
December 18	Sunday	10:30 am	FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT Service on the theme of Love with UCC Christmas Fund Special Offering “O Little Town of Bethlehem”
		11:45 am	PILGRIM CHURCH CHRISTMAS PARTY
December 21	Wednesday	7:30 pm	LONGEST NIGHT SERVICE
December 24	Saturday	5:30 pm	CHRISTMAS EVE Intergenerational Christmas Pageant
December 25	Sunday	10:30 am	CAROL SING Come sing your favorite carols and enjoy beautiful music! No Sunday School

THROUGHOUT THE CHRISTMAS SEASON WE OFFER GIVING OPPORTUNITIES.

During the holiday times, we are often motivated to share with others. Pilgrim makes it easy by connecting you to groups and agencies that do good work in faithful and responsible ways. Please see our list for ways to share during this season.



❄️ *Lauren* ❄️ *Devin* ❄️ *Dan* ❄️ *Diane*

A NOTE ABOUT ADVENT

Last year during Advent, I shared with you the remarkable story behind my favorite Christmas Hymn "Silent Night." In 1818 there was a priest named Joseph Mohr serving a small church in Oberndorf, Austria. On Christmas Eve, the church organ broke and there was no way it could be fixed in time for worship. But Joseph was determined that there would still be beautiful music by the time the congregation arrived that evening. He remembered a simple poem he'd written years earlier, and thought that if he could find another instrument and a good melody, the congregation could sing the verses of the poem. Joseph asked the church organist, Franz Gruber, to help. Franz was luckily used to writing music at short notice, and he came up with a soothing lullaby to accompany Joseph's poem. That evening "Stille Nacht" was sung for the very first time in a little village church in Austria accompanied only by a guitar.

In truth, many hymns have amazing stories behind them. If you've ever looked at the bottom of hymns printed in our New Century Hymnal you can actually read some of these stories! Which brings me to this Advent. Over the course of our four Sundays in Advent, I will share the stories behind four cherished Christmas hymns and we'll sing them during worship. They have much to teach us about hope, peace, joy, and love in our world today! ~Lauren

December 11: Theme of Joy, "Angels from the Realms of Glory"

December 18: Theme of Love, "O Little Town of Bethlehem"

PILGRIM JOYS AND CONCERNS

- We pray for Sylvia as she begins a new round of chemo on Tuesday against aggressive cancer growth.
- We pray for Carolyn Beckwith who needed to be moved to the ICU but is doing a bit better
- Lisa Boehm asked for prayers for Barbara Slutski, a family friend, who has fallen and is in a coma
- We pray for the protestors at Standing Rock
- Prayers for those affected by the fires in Cambridge, Tennessee and Oakland
- Prayers for the victims of the Ohio State attack

LONGEST NIGHT SERVICE - WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 21 AT 7:30 PM

We offer a meditative service for winter solstice, on **Wednesday, December 21 at 7:30 pm**, the longest night of the year. Christmas can be a time of great joy, but also can bring sadness for those who have experienced or are in the midst of loss, illness, or pain. Longest Night allows us to reflect on these myriad emotions with others in our quiet candlelit sanctuary. Extensive organ music and lovely hymns are performed, and readings and prayers spoke. All are welcome to join this restorative service.





PILGRIM CHURCH CHRISTMAS PARTY

Save the date of **Sunday, December 18** for our annual Pilgrim Christmas Party. We look forward to seeing you at this traditional event filled with festivity, fellowship, and fun! The party will take place immediately following worship. Please contact Beth Kurth if you are able to help out or would like to bring something. hughzhoney@gmail.com.



2016 MISSION HOLIDAY GIVING

Here are some of the projects that Pilgrim Church is supporting this Holiday Season. This list might inspire you and your family to find an outreach that touches your hearts.



Giving Tree. We dedicate our **Giving Tree** to the children at **Shiners Hospital** in Boston. Shriners is a 30-bed pediatric burn hospital providing acute, reconstructive, and rehabilitative care. Shriners Hospital specializes in pediatric care at no charge for children up to 18 years of age. The tree is located in

Pilgrim's sun room, and there are gift tags (with specific requests) hanging from the branches. Please take a tag and return it with the unwrapped gift by **Monday, December 19**. **Our Giving Tree Gifts must be NEW and unwrapped.**

MITTEN TREE SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11

This has become an annual celebration for us! Please bring new mittens, hats, and scarves to be donated to **East End House** in Cambridge. During the service, you will place your items on one of the Christmas trees located in the front of the sanctuary. If you prefer to make a cash donation, you can write a check to Pilgrim with **East End House** noted in the memo line.



Offerings during the Special Worship Services for this season:

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18 AND LONGEST NIGHT, DECEMBER 21 UCC Christmas Fund.

The UCC Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund provide direct financial assistance to individual UCC Clergy and lay church employees – to supplement pensions and health care, and provide thank you gifts and emergency grants for those in need.



Thank You for your generous support!
The Mission Committee

PAGEANT REHEARSAL SCHEDULE

This year, we will rehearse the pageant on: December 11th at 11:45

Final Rehearsal: December 24th at 4:00

On December 4th, those who were present practiced lines and got to refresh their knowledge of the pageant. On December 11th, we will run lines and practice a run through or two of the pageant. This is an important opportunity to be prepared and we will have pizza available for those who join us. The final rehearsal will take place before the Christmas Eve service begins. It is important that if you have already been cast for a role in the pageant or if you want to be involved, you come to one of the first two rehearsals.



MESSAGE FROM DEVIN HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH GROUP CORNER – LOCK IN

Saturday, December 17th to Sunday, December 18th - Lock In: Our youth group lock-in will take place on December 17th, we will meet at 6:00 pm at the church. As part of the lock-in we will be going to Lazer Craze and enjoying some pizza while we are there. When we return, we will have a bake-off judged by Devin and Reverend Lauren. We will have some treats and save some for the Christmas Party the next day. If you have any games you would like to bring, feel free to bring those, too. Let Devin know if you can make it at devin.Shmueli@pilgrimcongregational.org!

MESSAGE FROM DEVIN

Please note that there will be no Children's Church or Childcare on Christmas Day. On New Year's Day, there will only be childcare available!

A reminder that the church office will be closed Monday, December 26 through Monday, January 2, 2017. Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year to all!

FIGHT FOR RACIAL JUSTICE: A COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

Thursday, December 8, 7:00 p.m. at Temple Isaiah Lexington

With Rev. Dr. Ray Hammond M.D., M.A. and Rev. Mariama White-Hammond

The quality of race relations in this country impacts all of us. Together, let's learn how we can be part of the process that promotes social justice for everyone. Join our community conversation Thursday, December 8 at 7:00 p.m. at Temple Isaiah and grapple with the challenge of promoting positive race relations and a more fair justice system in Massachusetts and in our country. Come engage with our speakers Rev. Dr. Ray Hammond M.D., M.A. and his daughter, Rev. Mariama White-Hammond, in the sacred and serious work of talking about race and moving to action.

Rev. Ray Hammond is the founder and pastor of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) in Boston; Chairman and Co-Founder of the Ten Point Coalition; and member of the Executive Team of the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization and the Executive Committee of the Black Ministerial Alliance. Rev. Mariama White-Hammond is a Minister at Bethel AME Church and a racial justice and climate justice activist. She was Executive Director of Project HIP-HOP (a Boston youth social justice arts organization) and is currently a leader in the MA Interfaith Coalition for Climate Action, Green the Church, and other grassroots efforts. Questions? Contact Chuck Koplik at cmkoplik@alum.mit.edu.

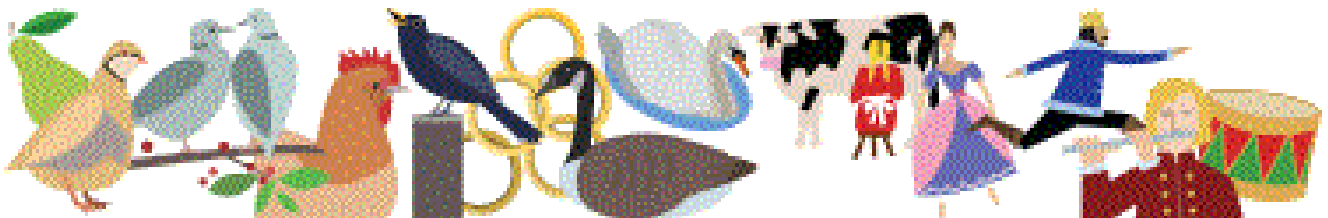


HANCOCK CHURCH PRESENTS TWO FREE HOLIDAY HANDBELL CONCERTS:

**Friday, December 16 from 10-11 am and
Sunday, December 18 from 3:00 - 4:15 pm**

The concert on the 16th will feature their weekday bell choir playing popular, sacred and classical holiday favorites from countries around the world and through the ages. All played on four octaves of handbells and chimes.

The concert on the 18th will feature the four handbell choirs of Hancock Church in a concert of popular, sacred, and classical holiday favorites from countries around the world and through the ages played on five octaves of handbells and six octaves of chimes by ringers of all ages. These concerts will be interactive and family-friendly, free and open to the public, with something to please listeners of all ages and cultures. Let us treat you to a holiday delight where you can sing along or dance in the aisles! Groups, please RSVP to the church office if you are able, 781 862 4220 with an approximate number of attendees and if you would like assistance at the curb.





POINSETTIA ORDERS

Poinsettias will decorate the church on two **Sundays, December 18 and December 25**. They will be from Wilson Farms, and are especially beautiful and full this year. If you wish to order a poinsettia plant, fill in the form below and send it to the church office by **Monday, December 12** with a check made payable to *Pilgrim Congregational Church*. Poinsettias are **\$9.00** per plant for a 6 1/2" pot.

I/We would like to order _____ poinsettia(s) for the Christmas services.

Enclosed is my/our check in the amount of \$ _____.

Name _____
(please print)

Optional: "In memory of

_____”

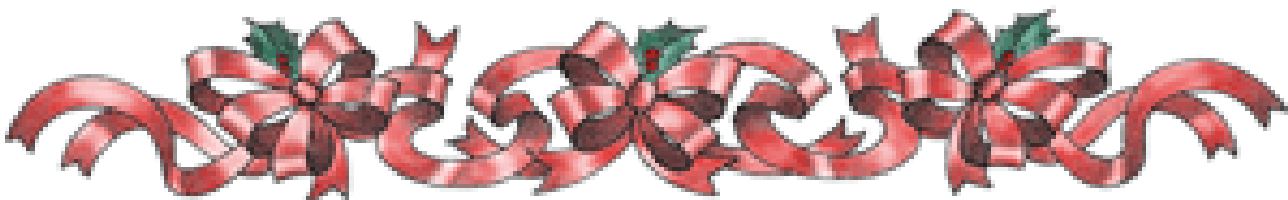
“In celebration of, In honor of, etc. (Please circle one)

_____”

Please check one:

_____ I would like my plant(s) to be delivered to a congregational member by the “Care Angels” (to be delivered sometime after the service on the 18th.)

_____ I will take my plant(s).



PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

DECEMBER 6, 2016

A publication of
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Sunday Worship and Church School - 10:30am
Choir Rehearsals: Thursdays at 7:30pm

Rev. Lauren Lorincz, Pastor

Daniel Schmidt, Director of Music

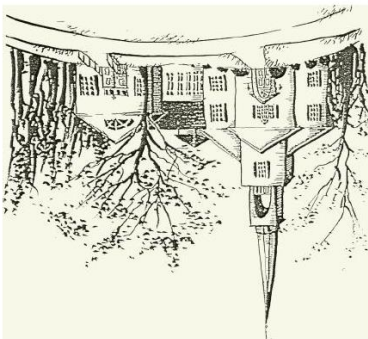
Devin Shmueli, Director of Christian Education and Youth Ministries

Diane Blair, Church Secretary

Diane Murphy, Nursery Care Provider

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