

# Trinity Tidings

## Taylor's TUCC-Points

Advent is finally here! In many ways, Advent is one of my favorite seasons. Why? Because we are awaiting the birth of the Christ child, but we are also awaiting the return of the Risen Christ—all at once. In some ways I see Advent as the perpetual season—aren't we always waiting for Christ to come again?

Advent literally means, "coming". We are coming toward God's physical entrance into the world. The promise to Mary and to all of us is that the precious baby she is carrying will save all people from their sins. It is a promise that was first foretold by the prophet Isaiah, that a young woman (or a virgin) who is with child shall bear a son and shall name him Emmanuel (Isaiah 7:14). Emmanuel means, "God is with us". That baby who is promised will also come to be called "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). It is His birth that we celebrate this season. It is His life that we worship our **"If God brings you to it, He will bring you through it."** honor and entire lives.

- Leslie Taylor

This is a season that is marked by all sorts of symbols. Those who gathered with us for the Hanging of the Greens service on November 30th, heard the explanation of many of symbols, but here they are for all of us.

The Paraments: For many months, during the Pentecost Season, or Ordinary Time, the color used in the church has been green. Green symbolizes growth— growth in the Christian life for us individually and collectively. During Advent, we change the paraments to purple, the color of royalty and of God's reign, in preparation for the coming of the Christ. Purple also symbolizes the penitence of the season—a symbol of a hurting world in need of a Savior. In some churches, the paraments are changed to blue, the color of hope. We wait for the coming of the Christ in eternal hope. On Christmas Eve we will change the color to white, symbolizing joy and the purity of Jesus Christ.

The Advent Wreath and the Candles: The Advent wreath is a German tradition. It is a simple circle of evergreen branches. Because the branches come in from outdoors during the winter in the Northern Hemisphere, the evergreen testifies to the continuation of life. Bending the branches in a circle reminds us of the unending love of God and of life without

### Events Calendar:

**Dec. 1:** First Sunday of Advent, Communion

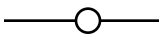
**Dec. 9th:** ASA Challenge

**Dec. 8:** Christmas Pageant Live Nativity 7:00 PM?

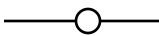
**Dec. 15:** Children's Program "O Christmas Tree"

**Dec. 24:** Christmas Eve services 7:00 PM and 11:00 PM

**Dec. 29:** Pastor Leslie on vacation. Rev. Diane Berger, preaching



Let's make every Sunday in December, "Bring a friend to church Sunday"! Let's share our good news with those without a church home.



### Birthdays:

**Jan. 1:** Mary Renner



end. Candles have been a part of the traditions of many peoples throughout the ages as a reminder of God's light—God's presence in a world of fear and uncertainty. We light a candle each week in Advent as we prepare for Christ's coming. The three that are purple symbolize the penitence of the season and the royalty of Christ. The pink one, lit on the third Sunday of Advent, is candle of Joy—it symbolizes there is already a glimmer of joy and God's brightness, even before Christ comes, for those who faithfully prepare the way. The white candle in the middle is the Christ Candle and is lit on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day to celebrate Christ's birth.

This year, the Advent Candles will be lit by the following people: Hope (Steve and Janine Holecamp), Peace (The Vermillion Family), Joy (Bryon and Josh Clatty), and Love (The Wells Family).

The Evergreens: Christmas greens had their origin in pagan cultures; those who saw in them deeper meanings for the church brought their use to us. Evergreens have

long been considered symbols of eternity, a sign of God's everlasting love, and an indication that the faithful will experience eternal life with God in Jesus Christ. The Advent custom of decorating with evergreen branches come to us from the people of the Middle Ages, who believed that preparations should be made for the coming of Christ. On the first Sunday of Advent, each family would gather evergreens and place them near the hearth in their home. We continue that tradition as we hang evergreen roping in our church home. The laurel and bay symbolize victory and triumph. Yew and Cypress can point to eternal life. Their spicy fragrance and deep green color remind us that when all else is bare, there remains a promise of resurrection—of re-birth—of new life in the spring.

The Christmas Tree is a wonderful sign of God's love and faithfulness. Never losing its green color, the Christmas tree reminds us of God's steadfast love, which endures forever. Legend has it that Martin Luther was the first person to decorate his home with a Christmas

tree. Luther was walking home one Christmas Eve when he saw the glitter of stars shining through the snow-covered branches of the fir trees. Luther was so awed by the sight that he took one of the trees home with him and placed candles on the branches to demonstrate to his family what a glorious sight he had seen. From this first Christmas tree in the Luther household, the



#### December Readings

**December 1st** - "Waiting on a Word from You"

Isaiah 64:1-9, Psalm 80: 1-7, 17-19, Mark 13: 24-37

**December 8th** - "Waiting on the Voice from the Wilderness"

Isaiah 40:1-11, Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13, Mark 1:1-8

7:00 PM The Trinity Live Nativity

**December 15th** - The Children's Christmas Pageant "O Christmas Tree"

**December 22nd** - "It's Worth the Wait!"

II Samuel 7:1-11, 16, Luke 1:26-38, Luke 1:47-55

**December 24h** - 7:00 PM - "Lesson, Carols and Candlelight", 11:00 PM - "A Night with Our Savior"

**December 29th** - The Rev. Diane Berger, Guest Preacher

\*Sermon Text

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### November Treasurer's Report:

Income:

Offerings (avg. \$884.75 per Sunday)	\$3,539.00
Other Income	409.74
Total Income	<u>\$3,984.74</u>

Line item expenses: \$3,369.49

custom spread. Now Christmas trees are used in homes, in churches, and in communities, wherever the birth of Christ is celebrated and the love of Christ is shared.

**Mistletoe:** Mistletoe is an "evergreen" plant that grows on the evergreen trees. In the time of the Romans, it was considered a symbol of hope and peace. Whenever enemies would meet under it, they would put their weapons aside, kiss each other on the cheek and declare a truce until the next day. Other people long ago believed that only happiness could exist under the mistletoe. So when they met under it, they sealed pledges of peace and friendship with a kiss. Another custom about the mistletoe comes from England. In the great York Cathedral, a large spray of mistletoe was laid on the altar each Yuletide. Some saw this as a reminder that we are dependent upon God for life, just as the mistletoe is dependent upon the tree to which it clings. Christians see the prickly leaves and the red berries of Holly as the symbols of the Crown of Thorns and sacrifice which Christ endured on Calvary. We do not celebrate

the Holy Christmas season without tying it to the season to follow; for it was to die that the infant Christ came to earth.

**The Lights:** Like the candles, the lights on the tree remind us of God's light breaking into the hurt of the world. They are symbols of God's grace and unlimited love. They also symbolize the stars under which the shepherds kept their watch. It was out of the multitude of stars that came the angel voices. The lights also symbolize one star—the one that pointed the way to the Savior of the world for the travelers and the shepherds that first Christmas night.

**The Chrismons:** In some churches, Chrismons (or Christ's monograms) decorate the tree in the sanctuary. They are handmade designs forming the familiar symbols of the Christian faith. First used in the Lutheran Church of the Ascension in Danville, Virginia, these symbols speak to Christians of the deep meaning of the Gospel. The fish is the most ancient symbol for followers of "the Way" and was used as a secret sign by early Christians. The first letters of the Greek words for "Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior" form the Greek work for fish (Icthus). The Anchor Cross was called the cross of hope by first century Chistians; it reminds us that Jesus is the hope of the world. The Chi Rho combines the first two letters of Christ in Greek. The x-shaped "chi" reminds us of the manger of Jesus. The "rho" is shaped like a shepherd's crook and reminds us of the first visitors to the manger. The star, angels, lambs, and other Christian symbols are also used for Chrismons; each of them helps us recall the Christmas story.



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The Christmas Creche (Nativity Scene): In 1223 Saint Francis re-created the events of Christ's birth with a live Nativity scene in the hills near Assisi, Italy in an attempt to help the illiterate population come to know the story of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. After he filled a manger with hay, surrounded it with real animals and placed a wax image of the baby Jesus into the "crib", he told the Christmas story to the villagers and shepherds. The tradition spread around the world. From simple to ornate, in homes, churches, and public buildings throughout the world, Nativity scenes (creches) can be seen everywhere.



The Poinsettia: In a few weeks, our chancel will be decorated with red, white and marbled poinsettias. This most popular flower of the Advent-Christmas season was discovered growing wild in Mexico by Dr. Joel Roberts Poinsett, the first American Ambassador to Mexico from 1825 to 1829. In Mexico, the plant was referred to as the "flower of the Holy Night" or the "Flaming Leaf". Its tropical red leaves are not the blossoms—the flowers are the small, yellow clusters at the center. A Mexican legend says that when blood fell on earth from the broken heart of a young girl, a poinsettia grew from each drop. The symbolism of the poinsettia is twofold. First, we are reminded of the blood that the Christmas infant came to shed for us all. Second, the star shaped formation of the red leaves reminds us of the star that shone that first Christmas.

Advent is a tough season for

children and adults alike. Waiting and preparing our hearts, our homes, and our church is exciting and hard all at the same time. We want to get to Christmas—we want to celebrate the birth and open presents like the Wise Ones did long ago. Well we have the greatest present God could ever give us. We have Jesus, the One who was, who is and who is to come. Have a blessed Advent, a holy Christmas and a peace-filled New Year!

See you in Church!  
Pastor Leslie

### Stroke Notes

It's hard to believe that the marathon is only SEVEN WEEKS away! I have learned a lot over these last several months and I hope these pieces have been helpful to you as well. As far as my fundraising goal goes, I still have a lot to raise (as of this writing, I still need to raise \$1750!) Thank you to those of you who have contributed already—you will never

know how much it means to me to have your support in this way.

In the next seven weeks, my key word will be FOCUS. I will need to focus on setting my priorities so that I can prepare for church and for my job at David's. I will need to focus on time management so that I can fit everything I need to do into each day. I will need to focus on my fundraising goal, focus on my training, focus on my eating, focus on my health, focus on celebrating the joy I will surely feel when I cross the finish line!

I cannot—I must not focus on the negative (this hill is hard to climb, I have 10 miles in front of me, my legs are going to hurt and be wobbly). If I focus on the obstacles, then I will never make it through to the end—I will never cross the finish line, I will only finish the course. What I mean by that is, if I prepare myself to climb the hill by slowing down a little, changing my stride a little, then the hill is not hard to climb—it is no longer



a challenge. I have changed my perspective of the hill and it is now just another part of the course. If I have complained all along the course, there is no joy in finishing. If I work hard, keep in mind that every step is a step closer to the finish—is a step closer to meeting my personal goal—is a step closer to better health—then when the finish line comes I can leap for joy! If I keep in mind that you all are praying for me and are among my “cloud of witnesses” my finishing will be a victory!

But isn't that just like life in the church? We need to set priorities. We need to focus on the ways in which we can best use our gifts and talents to serve the Lord. We need to celebrate the good news that is happening in our lives and in the life of the church. We work together, we pray together, to celebrate together and that's what it is all about!

### **New to the library**

Love Comes Softly , the first book in a six part series by Janette Oke. This is the story of Marty, a young, vibrant and independent girl of nineteen who travels West with her new husband, seeking adventure and fortune. You will ache with Marty when, in the same way as many of her pioneer sisters, the venture turns to tragedy and Marty is left alone to learn firsthand the lessons of pain, heartache, frustration and anger.

### **Youth Group News**

On Sunday, Nov. 24, the youth group hosted a meeting with St. Michael's and Trinity UCC, Baltimore youth. The evening began with get acquainted activities. The group participated in a devotional discussion regarding "communicating with God". Several rounds of Wheel of Fortune challenged the youth. Pizza and socializing completed the evening.

### **Youth Group Calendars**

The youth group will again be selling calendars. We are now taking orders. If you wish to purchase a 2003 calendar, please contact a youth group member, Peggy Shriner or Kelly Clatty.

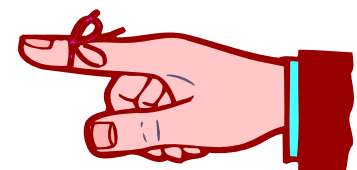
### **Introduction to Stamping**

Please join us on Sunday January 5th, 2pm at Trinity UCC for an Introduction to Creative Rubber Stamping. Open to all ages and the cost is free. Each participant will make several rubber stamped projects, including greeting cards. Creativity is not necessary. Please sign up in the Social room or see Jennifer Ortman.

### **Introduction to Scrapbooking**

Attention those of you with grocery bags full of photos! Learn to safely sort and organize your photos into photo safe albums. Please bring ten related photos that can be cropped (cut). Open to all ages free of charge! Join us and learn to preserve your memories. Sign up in the social room or see Jennifer Ortman. Workshop is January 18th, Saturday at 2pm.

**Have an item you want to include in the next Tidings?**



Send your events, birthdays, news, facts, figures, dates and locations to Mary Renner.

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Trinity is a family of faith that welcomes all people to experience and share the love of God through worship, study, nurture and care.

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**Have an idea or item of interest  
for the next newsletter?**

Please contact Mary Renner at (740) 246 5987 for more information. The newsletter is published the first week of every month. Deadlines for submissions are the last day of the preceding month. All entries are preferred in a computer text format such as Microsoft Word.

Please send submissions to:

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