

Ecumenical Prayer Cycle for 27 December—02 January 2010

This week we pray for Ghana, Nigeria

Week 1 - Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories



INTERCESSIONS

Give thanks for:

- The Middle East Council of Churches and its efforts towards Christian unity and justice.
- The efforts of the various churches in Syria to work together to find a common witness, particularly their engagement in finding a common date for Easter for all Christians.
- The endless source of inspiration that pilgrims of Islam, Christianity and Judaism find in the sacred places in the land called holy.
- Peace-makers.
- Rebuilders of Lebanon after the destructive war.
- Olive trees that have survived many generations and still produce fruit.
- People replanting olive trees.
- The Nile and its life-giving water.
- The pyramids, hieroglyphic writing and other wonders of ancient Egyptian civilization.
- The ancient churches in these countries which have faithfully transmitted the Gospel from generation to generation, even when severely threatened or persecuted.
- Monks and nuns who give themselves to a life of prayer and service.

Pray for:

- Peace in the region, especially between Palestinians and Israelis.
- Respect for human rights and an end to unjust imprisonment and extra-judicial killing.
- Solutions for refugees, who still yearn to return home.
- Efforts to confront corruption.
- The hungry and homeless.
- Those whose homes are in the slums, the cemeteries, the garbage dumps, the refugee camps.
- Those who insist on violent solutions and who see force as the primary means of solving conflicts, that they might find more humanitarian methods.



THE MESSENGER

Open hearts. Open minds. Open doors.

The people of The United Methodist Church®

*December 27, 2009
Seasons of the Spirit*

“Who is This Child?”

Derek Lang, Certified Lay Speaker

Luke 2: 41—52



Usher/Greeter: Frances and Gloria

Prayer: Becky

Scripture: Wendy

Sound Techs: Kelvin

Hospitality Frances and Gloria

Altar Flowers: Judie Thach, Ada Fung, Donna Louie and David Wong

Worship with Us Next Week: January 3, 2010 Epiphany 1

Speaker: George Martzen

Prayer: Hoang-Anh

Scriptures: Burt



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View from the EMC Chair
By Derek Lang



At last Sunday's Sunday School Christmas program, we enjoyed the visit of a stranger. It was not Santa Clause; rather it was St. Nicholas. To encourage the spirit of Christian giving, we invited St. Nicholas to share his story and help us write Christmas cards to the homebound who our carolers would visit this past week. For those who are not familiar with St. Nicholas, here are some notes from the St. Nicholas Center.

"The true story of Santa Claus begins with Nicholas, who was born during the third century in the village of Patara. At the time the area was Greek and is now on the southern coast of Turkey. His wealthy parents, who raised him to be a devout Christian, died in an epidemic while Nicholas was still young. Obeying Jesus' words to "sell what you own and give the money to the poor," Nicholas used his whole inheritance to assist the needy, the sick, and the suffering. He dedicated his life to serving God and was made Bishop of Myra while still a young man. Bishop Nicholas became known throughout the land for his generosity to those in need, his love for children, and his concern for sailors and ships.

Under the Roman Emperor Diocletian, who ruthlessly persecuted Christians, Bishop Nicholas suffered for his faith, was exiled and imprisoned. The prisons were so full of bishops, priests, and deacons, there was no room for the real criminals—murderers, thieves and robbers. After his release, Nicholas attended the Council of Nicaea in AD 325. He died December 6, AD 343 in Myra and was buried in his cathedral church, where a unique relic, called manna, formed in his grave. This liquid substance, said to have healing powers, fostered the growth of devotion to Nicholas. The anniversary of his death became a day of celebration, St. Nicholas Day, December 6th (December 19 on the Julian Calendar).

Through the centuries many stories and legends have been told of St. Nicholas' life and deeds. These accounts help us understand his extraordinary character and why he is so beloved and revered as protector and helper of those in need.

One story tells of a poor man with three daughters. In those days a young woman's father had to offer prospective husbands something of value—a dowry. The larger the dowry, the better the chance that a young woman would find a good husband. Without a dowry, a woman was unlikely to marry. This poor man's daughters, without dowries, were therefore destined to be sold into slavery. Mysteriously, on three different occasions, a bag of gold appeared in their home-providing the needed dowries. The bags of gold, tossed through an open window, are said to have landed in stockings or shoes left before the fire to dry. This led to the custom of children hanging stockings or putting out shoes, eagerly awaiting gifts from Saint Nicholas. Sometimes the story is told with gold balls instead of bags of gold. That is why three gold balls, sometimes represented as oranges, are one of the symbols for St. Nicholas. And so St. Nicholas is a gift-giver."

May we all celebrate Saint Nicholas' example of giving.

Poinsettia Donors:



Our Thanks to the following people who donated the lovely poinsettia plants that decorated our sanctuary during the Christmas season:

Mr & Mrs Kwok Leung Kwan, Linda Woo, James Yu, Christine S. S. Wong, Ulander Pang (in memory of Peter Pang), Dora Chann, Vikki Chan, Sue Wong, Lin Kam Lok Huey, Donna Louie, Mr and Mrs Wing Lee, Mr and Mrs Larry Woon, Mr and Mrs Leo Lin, Elsie Wan, Mr and Mrs Mabel Lee, Rev and Mrs Peter Lau, Mr and Mrs David Wong, Mr and Mrs Richard Fong (in memory of Mr and Mrs Freeman Chan), Mr and Mrs Richard Fong (in memory of Mr and Mrs Loy Fong), Mr and Mrs David Yeh, Mr and Mrs Eric Ng, and Theresa Leung

Upcoming Notes & News –

- **Alameda County Food Drive!** This will be our last week for collecting food for the Alameda County Food Bank, so bring your donations **NOW!**
- **AHS (Asian Health Services) Toy Drive:** Thanks to those of you who brought toys, and volunteered time to help wrap!
- **Alternative Market** brought in more than \$360.00 which will be donated to the Alameda County Food Bank.
- **Super Bowl of Caring** will be coming soon! Would anyone like to take up the CHARGE?? Please see Peggy to learn more about it!
- **Knitting Group** will not be meeting this Sunday. The next gathering will be on January 31st after coffee hour. If you need help or advice with your knitting project, please connect with Laura or Jane.
- **Sign up for Coffee Hour!** The list will be available for 2010 for you to share your gift of hospitality! See Laura.
- Many THANK YOUS go your way from the **Entertainment Book Fund-raiser** which raised nearly \$200! Due to the efforts of 10 core people, plus Gloria, we sold enough books to further support CCUMC causes! Happy New 2010! From Gloria, Leader of the effort. Thank you also to the Treasurer for her fine help.