

**REFLECTION: LET IT BE** (Luke 1:26-38; 47-55)  
Sunday, December 21, 2008

“Hear, child, what I am sent to tell.”—this is W. H. Auden’s version of Gabriel’s message to Mary—

“Hear, child, what I am sent to tell: Love wills your dream to happen, so Love’s will on earth may be, through you, no longer a pretend but true... what I am willed to ask, your own Will has to answer; child, it lies within your power of choosing to conceive the Child who chooses you.”

Mary’s encounter with God’s messenger Gabriel, is known in tradition as “the Annunciation,” the announcement. But as Auden’s version suggests, this story is not just an announcement from on high, it is also an invitation. “It lies within your power of choosing to conceive the Child—the God—who chooses you.” It lies within your power of choosing.

Commentators through the ages have debated whether Mary could choose, whether she could, in fact, have said “no”—but it seems to me clear that if love cannot, by definition, coerce then the possibility of a freely chosen “no” is a precondition for any authentic “yes,” in Mary’s life, in Jesus’s, in Peter’s, Paul’s and in each of ours.

And Mary’s choice, her “yes” to that perplexing invitation is both simple and profound—I am yours, let it be. This is not “yes, but”...as in “yes, but...why?” or “yes, but where?” or, my personal favorite, “yes, but not right now”...Her reply—“I am yours, let it be” whispered words of wisdom, a prayer, an icon of open-hearted consent.

“We don’t get to make our lives up” writes theologian Stanley Hauerwas, “We get to receive our lives as gifts... Christian discipleship is about learning to receive our life as a gift without regret.” We all cling to the seductive myth that assures us: we are in charge, we do control our destinies, freedom means limitless possibility—even though it is so plain that the things that shape us the most all lie beyond our grasp—our parents, our children, our genes, our culture, the economy, the weather, when we are born and when we will die. The one thing that remains most fully in our control is how we receive the gift of life and how we respond to the invitation to love, to dream with God, to “choose the God who chooses you.”

And lest we be tempted to think of this attitude of open-hearted consent as passive, weak or naive, we are also given Mary’s powerful and prophetic song of response, the Magnificat, a song that we are not just invited to hear but, I believe, claim as our own. One version goes like this:

My soul sings in gratitude.  
I’m dancing in the mystery of God.  
The light of the Holy One is within me  
and I am blessed, so truly blessed.  
This goes deeper than human thinking.  
I am filled with awe  
at Love whose only condition  
is to be received.  
The gift is not for the proud,  
for they have no room for it.  
The strong and self-sufficient ones  
don’t have this awareness.  
But those who know their emptiness  
can rejoice in Love’s fullness.  
It’s the Love that we are made for,  
the reason for our being.  
It fills our inmost heart space  
and brings to birth in us, the Holy One.  
My soul sings in gratitude.  
I’m dancing in the mystery of God  
—Joy Cowley

—Ethel Hornbeck, Parish Assistant for Spiritual Formation

## Yootz Corner...

### SPC WASHINGTON MISSION/WORK STUDY TRIP

SPC adults and youth ages 12 and older are invited to participate in a mission/work study trip to Washington, D.C. We will travel to Washington by car on Friday, **January 23** and return Sunday afternoon **January 25**. Part of our time will be in service to D.C. Central Kitchen, preparing and serving food to the homeless. We will spend time sharing our respective experiences, learning about our many differences, and living into the common aspects of life we share as a community of faith and action. The cost is \$65 per person for two nights in D.C., food, and transportation. If financing is a problem, please let us know. Reservation forms are being distributed through the Youth Program, or get them from either Jeff Hornbeck, jhornbeck@frontiernet.net, 304-876-0566 or Brandon Dennison, bmdherdfan@aol.com, 304-268-6307. Please return forms or let us know if you plan to attend by **January 9**.

## Mark Your Calendars...

**MY BEATING HEART** Calling all who attend SPC, especially ushers! Registered Nurse and SPC member Dena Hill will conduct the annual refresher training on the church's defibrillator, **Sunday, January 11**. A session will be held in the sanctuary after each service. Please attend, and—at the same time—hope and pray that no one ever has need of it.

**LENTEN SOUP SUPPERS** Sunday evenings, March 1, 8, 15, and 22. We'll gather at 6 p.m. for soup and bread; program at 6:45 p.m. More details to follow.

**CHOIR FESTIVAL** Sunday, January 25, 4 p.m. at SPC.

## SPC Monthly Activities...

**TAIZE SERVICE** First Wednesdays, 7:30 p.m. in the sanctuary. A Service of Prayer in song, silence and candlelight. **Next: January 7**.

**WOMEN'S CIRCLE** First Thursdays, 10:00 a.m., Fellowship Hall. All women of the church are invited to attend our annual soup and salad luncheon on **Jan. 8**.

**COLLEGE STUDENT FELLOWSHIP** including dinner and discussion with Pastor Tremba. First and Third **Thursdays** at 6:30 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall. **Next: January 15**.

**CHURCH 101** *The Heart of Christianity* with Pastor Tremba. First Saturdays, 9–10:30 a.m. Fellowship Hall. Two parts each time. Topical discussion and any and all questions. **Next: February 7**.

**FIRST THINGS FIRST SUNDAY** Coins for relief of hunger and non-perishables for JCCM (see list under **Notices: JCCM**). **Next: January 11**.

**CHURCH 201** with Pastor Tremba & Ethel Hornbeck. Discussion of *Quest for the Living God* by Elizabeth Johnson. Books (\$25). Pay what you can. Second **Wednesdays** at 7:30 p.m. **January 14, February 11, March 11, April 8**.

**CANTERBURY SERVICES**, second Thursday of the month at 10:30 a.m. **Next: January 8**.

**ROUNDTABLE WITH ETHEL HORNBECK** Conversation and reflection with and around scripture, poetry and other selected texts. Third Thursdays, 10:00–11:00 a.m. in the balcony. **Next: January 15**.

### SUPPER GROUPS

TGIF, **Friday, January 16**, 6:30 p.m. at Karen Davison's home, 304-876-9191.

Moveable Feast, **Saturday, February 7**, 6:30 p.m. at Becky Phipps' home, 304-876-0298.

**MEN'S BREAKFAST** Third Saturdays. Breakfast at 7:30 a.m. Discussion 8:00 – 9:00 a.m. **Next: January 17**.

**CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER** Third Sundays, balcony, 7:00 p.m. **Next: January 18**.

## Notices...

**NEEDED: USED COMPUTER** Does anyone have one (5 years old or newer) you no longer need? I have a good home for it! Chris Kaye 304-876-1497.

**JCCM** (Jefferson County Community Ministries) is experiencing many more requests for help. Current pantry needs:

- Jelly
- Pancake syrup
- Pancake mix
- Saltine crackers
- Canned fruits – all varieties
- Instant hot chocolate packages
- Coffee – instant & perked, regular & decaf
- Disposable razors
- Diapers – sizes 1-5
- Toothpaste
- Clean baby food jars or tubs w/lids
- Clean pint size jars w/lids

*Place items in the baskets at the bottom of stairs on the way to the nursery.*

**SHENANDOAH WOMEN'S CENTER** Most urgent ongoing needs include: pre-paid long distance phone cards, Martins/Walmart/Food Lion/Sheetz gift cards, **used cell phones (with or without charger)**, laundry detergent (powder), shower gel, ACT Fluoride rinse, waxed dental floss, pain relievers for adults and children, cold/flu medicine, cough syrup and drops, lice treatment kits, baby wipes, and diapers.

*Place items in the red basket at the bottom of stairs on the way to the nursery. Please do NOT donate clothing!*

**HISPANIC MISSION FOOD OUTREACH** Most requested items include: rice; dry (not canned) pinto beans, potatoes, salt, sugar, cooking oil, and coffee.

*Place items in the baskets at the bottom of stairs on the way to the nursery.*

**DISHES 'R' US** Are you missing a dish or container? There are many in the SPC kitchen used to take food to various members. Please take yours home by **January 20** or we will donate them to the Rescue Mission.

**PAPER RECYCLING** 4-H group at Christ Reformed Church, 8–9:15 a.m. Paper, cardboard, magazines, books. Place in paper bags, boxes, or tie securely. **NO PLASTIC BAGS. Next: February 7.**

**2009 PCUSA MISSION YEARBOOKS** and children's Yearbooks are in the Fellowship Hall. \$5 each. Pay what you can.

### PROPERTY UPDATE

In the sanctuary, in time for Christmas, Mike Henderson:

- Repaired and painted several new areas, not treated two years ago, on both east and west walls. Much of this was stripped back to the brick, and a sealer was applied to the brick before re-plastering.
- Spackled and painted the wall (Barbara's wall) that hides the Fellowship Hall doors. This was badly dinged up.
- Painted the baseboards on both walls. These had three shades of white and looked really bad.
- Painted all window sills.
- Rebuilt the entire exterior panels that cover the lower sections of the two front doors each side of the main door. These were so rotted that I literally pushed my finger completely through the wood. These were reinstalled with a water barrier under the lowest wood rail, to stop wicking of water from the brickwork.

We want to compliment Mike for an exceptional job, as well as his diligence in keeping the dust to a minimum.

There is more work to be done in the narthex and in the balcony. BUT first, we have to solve some roof leaks.  
*—John Burns*

### AN OPEN LETTER TO SPC

Dear All: I just wanted to share with you another wonder of our congregation, which is to say all of you. On Christmas Eve day I dropped by SPC to take remaining food donations up to the Hispanic Ministry at St. Joseph's. I ended up taking one huge box and two of the baskets full of rice, beans, oil, coffee—all the needs that a Latino family would need for a basic family meal. It was accepted with much gratitude up in Martinsburg and will really make a difference for those families who cannot access JCCM and other charitable organizations.

Many of the Latino community are truly a hidden need; folks who want nothing more than a job for Christmas and are grateful for such simple gifts as their health and enough food to feed their families.

I am always amazed at the continued generosity of SPC, and your willingness to listen to that small inner voice. It has made a huge difference, not only to you, the members of the church, but to the world that you touch in so many ways. The SPC congregation truly is full of ministers to the world and I for one get to see the difference you make and remind those with whom I interact of what a great church we have. There are too many blessings here to count. Here's to a joyous New Year.  
*—Jeff Hornbeck*

## Greetings from Friends...

I received an email from Richard and Angela West (most will recall Richard did a pulpit exchange with Randy in Summer 2007). Richard has taken a new position with only two as opposed to six churches and they are in another lovely part of Scotland. They both are giving talks about their experience in Shepherdstown. Angela mentioned the lovely prayer shawl she received from the Women of the Church, which she takes along on her talks. And she shares the pattern with the women. They send "fondest wishes to everyone in Shepherdstown."

*—Rie Wilson*

Greetings Friends,

Rachelle and I moved to the Washington DC area and bought a house in Mt. Rainier, MD in April. We are settling in to the neighborhood and know lots of the people who live here, many who have connections to Rolling Ridge.

Rachelle is the Director of the Mennonite Central Committee Washington Office. I continue to work on projects for FOCUS, making it out to WV once a month, but mostly working from home. I also make sure everything stays purring along on the home front.

Especially now with our two children! Yep! We're parents. Mario is 12 and his sister Lini is 6. We have been involved in this process for over a year and it is exciting to see them finally transitioning into our home. We are also attending a multiracial congregation in DC and feel truly blessed to have found such a church home.

We ask for your continued prayers in light of all of these transitions. We are grateful for SPC's role in our lives and wish you continued blessings as a congregation.  
*—Blessings and Shalom, Keith Lyndaker Schlabach*

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**PASTOR TREMBA GRANTED 12-WEEK SABBATICAL** With the approval of the members at the annual business meeting November 16, Pastor Tremba will be away from church duties for 12 weeks beginning May 20. The 12 weeks includes two vacation weeks plus six weeks of accumulated study leave. He will likely remain in the area for the first six weeks and then be away for a month before returning for the final two weeks. A book or booklet may be in the works. During his absence Ethel Hornbeck will coordinate pastoral care and Sunday services. Kathy Reid will coordinate administrative matters.

## Thank You...

Dear Presbyterians,  
Thank you for the beautiful shawl and for prayers and concern. Laign will be terribly missed by many, but we trust God for the grace to continue on.  
Again, many thanks.

— *Sincerely, Frances Banks*

My Dear Friends and Church Family,  
May I express my true heart felt feelings to all of you for being with me to celebrate my 90th birthday. You are wonderful, loving, unforgettable. Your love and blessings inspire me to make it to 100 years, if God be willing. May God bless all of you always.  
— *With grateful Love, Zelda Virts*

To the ROCKIN' Yootz, I very proudly delivered 15, count 'em 15, cases of canned food to the Shenandoah Women's Center. This is a particularly tough time for the Center and its clients, so they were extremely grateful.  
— *Rie Wilson*

## Financial Corner...

**GENERAL FUND** through December 28. Expected: \$275,000. Actual giving: \$269,056. Building Fund pledged for 2008: \$27,000. Submitted to date: \$33,579.

**CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE:** \$3,670.31 to be divided equally between JCCM and the Presbyterian Disaster Relief Fund.

**PRESBYTERIAN INVESTMENT & LOAN PROGRAM (PILP).** You get a good return on your investment while helping SPC (rebate on our mortgage) plus other Presbyterian churches. Visit: [www.pcusa.org/pilp/](http://www.pcusa.org/pilp/).

**NEXT NEWSLETTER: February 2009.** Announcements, articles or news on our members? Contact the office, 304-876-6466 or <[office@spcworks.org](mailto:office@spcworks.org)>. Copy deadline **January 21**.

**HELP SAVE US POSTAGE** The 2009 offering envelopes are in the Fellowship Hall. Please take your labeled box so we won't have to mail it. If your is missong contact the office, 304-876-6466.

Visit [www.spcworks.org](http://www.spcworks.org) on a regular basis for all the latest news, podcasts (new), calendar events and much more.

### WEATHER-RELATED CANCELLATIONS

Check web page or call the church 304-876-6466 for a message.