

Welcome to your spirit's home...

Union Church of Bay Ridge

of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A.
Eightieth Street and Ridge Boulevard

IV Advent



Manger Service

Chapel, Parish House and Office
8101 Ridge Boulevard at Eighty-First Street, Brooklyn, NY 11209
www.ucbr.org ❖ unionchurch@earthlink.net ❖ 718.745.0438

The Reverend Mary Barrett Speers, Pastor ❖ Vince Peterson, Minister of Music
Ed Huml, BRUCA Program Director ❖ Jody Levine, Playgroup Director and Administrator



ORDER OF WORSHIP 11AM DECEMBER 20, 2009

IV Advent Manger Service: Blessing of Animals and People

+ *God Waits for the World* +

CHRISTMAS MUSIC

CALL TO WORSHIP

Song for the Child by Julia Cunningham

Rev. Speers

+CAROL no. 54

From Heaven Above

+ *God Promises Light to the World* +

FOURTH ADVENT CANDLE *after the candle is lit, we say this "antiphon:"*

Michelle Gibbens

O KEY OF DAVID, who opens and no one closes, who closes and no one opens:

Come, and bring forth the captive who sits in darkness and in the shadow of death.

Come, Lord Jesus.

after a brief silence, let us sing...

+CAROL no. 24

Away in a Manger

+**THE PEACE OF CHRIST**

please offer the Peace of Christ to your neighbors:

The peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all:

And also with you.

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

READING: *How Did the Animals Know?* by Julia Cunningham

+ *God Appears in Surprising Ways* +

THE PROPHET ANNOUNCES THE PEACEABLE KINGDOM

Isaiah 11:1-9

ANTHEM *The Friendly Beasts*

arr. Clarence Dickenson

THE BIRTH OF JESUS IN A STABLE IN PALESTINE

Luke 2:1-7

READING: *The Stable Rat* by Julia Cunningham

Rev. Speers

+CAROL no. 57

The Snow Lay on the Ground

+ *God's Love Fills the World* +

PRESENTATION OF GIFTS, TITHES AND OFFERINGS

OFFERTORY *E'en So, Lord Jesus*

Paul Manz

+**DOXOLOGY** no. 592 and **PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

Holy One, you who are complete in Yourself and the source of all power and grace, place within us the spirit of your holy child Jesus, fill us with such love and awe and delight that we become a blessing to everyone we meet, and send into your world through us the abundant life we have through the one who was, and is, and is to come, Jesus Christ, our Lord. AMEN.

+ *God's Love Is Revealed in All Creation* +

+**THANKSGIVING AND PRAYERS FOR HEALING FOR ANIMALS AND PEOPLE**

...as the baby was born, they gathered round the mystery of Emmanuel: God With Us.

God our Maker, we give you thanks for life and love, for humans and animals, for plants and water and air and light, and for your immeasurable love in your gift of Jesus our brother, strong and good. May we be more like him: may we learn to be the people our animals think we are, the people you made us to be, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Please gather in a circle for prayers and blessing of animals. The pastor and elders will pray with each family group according to their needs, concluding with all saying together...

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Hymnal p. 16: "debts"

MUSIC DURING THE PRAYERS

+**CLOSING HYMN** no. 27

Gentle Mary Laid Her Child

+**BENEDICTION**

... let all creation cry, **Alleluia! Amen!**

MORE CHRISTMAS MUSIC

+all may stand; latecomers may be seated at these times. **Unison prayers are in bold.**

*You will always be welcome here. This is God's house and a happy church home. Let us be your church family, for we are all beloved children of God. Join us regularly for Christian worship, nurture, and the doing of God's work in the world—
and all shall be well; all manner of thing shall be well.*

Isaiah 11:1-9 NRSV

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

²The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

³His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide by what his ears hear,

⁴but with righteousness he shall judge the poor
and decide with equity for the peoples of the earth;
he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

⁵The wolf shall live with the lamb,
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,
and a little child shall lead them.

the cow and the bear shall graze,
their young shall lie down together,
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.

They will not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain,
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.



Luke 2:1-7 NRSV

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. ⁵He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Song for the Child from *The Stable Rat* by Julia Cunningham

The still, small breathing of this child
cored a whirlwind. There a mild
soft stir of straw and moving sheep
awoke a century from sleep.
A lantern swung an arc of light
across the weeping face of night,
and to a world that gave no home
the many-mansioned child had come..

How Did the Animals Know?

How did they know, what told them standing there
rooted under rough-hewn beam and rotted rafter?
What quieted the ox and caused the mare
to whinny twice, a hen to cluck like laughter?
Why did three shepherds usher in six sheep
to form a wall of warmth across the door?
How did they know that child so deep asleep
upon the straw of this hoof-hardened floor
would wake a world? Was it a winged spirit
entering their silences who came
speaking in hums that they might better hear it,
a heralding of him, this child without a name?
Grunt and crow, squeal and bark and bray,
they raised hosannas to this blessed day.

The Stable Rat

one

I am a shadow, gray, gray, gray—
never lightened by scarlet or splotched gold
or even a dot of the green I see
when I gaze from the cracks,
peering out of my necessary night.
I have often wondered,
what if I swallowed a tiny lantern?
Would my black eyes brighten
and show me where to go
other than here in this hostel
of beam and board and rafter?
I've heard the others, know their shapes
as clearly as my own;
the donkey braying at the foolishness of hens,
the cow content to give her daily pail of milk,
never withholding her placidity,
the horse too old for harnessing, who wakes to eat,
the sheep, clotting their corner
in four mounds of wool
white as moons.
They hear my teeth gnawing to keep them sharp,
they see my tail over the edge of sacks,
my mouth feasted full of grain,
but never turn to look, to recognize.
I beg their attention and in my pain
shriek like the prongs of pitchfork against stone.
I am alone and gray, forgotten,
a fill of skin so small among their legs.
They stare where I am not,
no thing to name,
no presence to be known.

two

That was then, but when this evening came
two strangers entered here,
two-legged, and the one wrapped round in cloth

lay down in straw, the other hovered over,
and soon the two were three.
I crept warily to where she lay
as did the others move close and closer still,
breathing upon the one
who had been born beneath this roof.
The donkey shunted me away with threat of hoof,
the horse loomed, and the hens
hopped so near, their feathers stirred his hair.
The sheep became a wall to block the wind
that seeped from every stall,
and I was left outside the circling of him.
Then I saw his hand grope for the shadow
that was me.
His fingers clutched my tail
And lovingly he turned me round to see

Suddenly I became green and gold and scarlet,
haloed by a flame, a fire as was he,
a rising higher than the evening star—
a glory given me,
shadow and self together.

Invitation to Prayers for Animals and People

Today it is almost Christmas, and we picture Joseph caring for Mary on their long walk to Bethlehem: they are almost there, and we know what they do not: they will find room only in a stable.

As we gather with the animals in this warm place, we pray for our neighborhood and our city, for rich and poor, happy and sad, and especially for the hungry and the homeless, the lonely and the fearful.

We give thanks for our creature comforts, and for the creatures who comfort us, for it was the animals who first shared their home with Mary and Joseph and the newborn baby Jesus: their straw, their manger, the warmth of their bodies, the softness of their fur.

And as the baby was born, they gathered round the mystery of Emmanuel: God With Us.

God our Maker, we give you thanks for life and love, for humans and animals, for plants and water and air and light, and for your immeasurable love in your gift of Jesus our brother, strong and good. May we be more like him: may we learn to be the people our animals think we are, the people you made us to be, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Announcements

Visitors, welcome! Please join us after worship for refreshments and conversation, and please sign the Union Church guest book (at the back) so that we may get to know you better.

Many thanks to all worship leaders: Michelle Gibbens, Vince Peterson and the choir, Lorrie Green for today's refreshments; Maryellen Van Royen (Communion bishop) and Kristin Miller (coffee hour bishop).

All of us enjoy the Coffee Hour at the close of worship. Most of us do a lot for the church (we're a small church). No matter how much else you are doing, **you too can sign up for at least one coffee hour per season**, and make the Program and Mission committee really happy.

Food collection season is upon us, and Jennifer Segna's December theme is "Boxing Day", from the English custom of bringing boxes of food to the hungry on the day after Christmas. Bring anything that comes in a box! Instant mashed potatoes, pasta, mac-and-cheese, cereal, etc.

The Book of Remembrance is open to remember dear departed members of Union Church: today, 12/20—Jean Dangman; 12/27—Josephine Coury; 1/3—Olive Buerk; 1/10—Emma Kirk Beck; 1/17—Edward Norstrand; 1/24—Leinda Mouacdie; 1/31—Virginia Villano.

Prayer List requests should come to the church office by telephone **718.745.0438**.

Continue to pray for the restoration of creation; for all living in the midst of war, poverty, natural and economic disaster; for prisoners and all who watch and pray for them, especially the Church of Gethsemane. Continue to pray for/stay in touch with: Vince Peterson, New York City Presbytery, Arabella Meadows-Rogers, Art Samuel, Iris Norstrand, Emile Serposs, Milford Anderson, Amanda Silverman, Bill Louisa, Helen Kretiv; also the family and friends of Nellie; Donna, Janet, Geraldine, John and the Vandermarcq family, Mary, Jane, Helen, Sally.

This Week and Ongoing

Today at 4pm is our **Union Church Sing-It-Yourself Messiah** (sing along with the choir) with special auction: bid on your chance to conduct the *Hallelujah* chorus!

This evening after Messiah: 6pm Manse Christmas party, buffet supper, carols and cheer. Bring your friends!

Thursday, December 24 is Christmas Eve! Join us at 10pm for carols, candlelight, and communion, with choir and organ, to welcome the Christ Child. This is our Christmas service.

On Sunday, January 3, we celebrate Epiphany, Three Kings Day, the Feast of the Light to the Nations. Come also and celebrate the **3rd anniversary of Vince among us!**

Bible Study meets 7-8pm every other Tuesday in the Parish House. Next date: Tuesday, December 29, dinner to celebrate the year.

Yoga classes meet Wednesday 6:45-8:15pm in the Parish House Chapel.

Support Group for Parents of Children with Special Needs meets first Mondays at 11am in the Sanctuary, except for holidays: next meeting Monday, January 4 (no meeting in December).

Taizé Evensong first Tuesdays, next at 7pm **January 5**, Parish House Chapel, 8101 Ridge Blvd.

Plain Living and High Thinking January 9

Budget process meeting 9am-12:30pm in the Parish House, and the inevitable Dismantling of the dGreens, until next year, in the Sanctuary. All hands are needed for these unlovely, necessary tasks.