



Community Connections

December 2011/January 2012



Rev. Jeff O'Grady, Pastor

JOY TO THE WORLD!

The O'Grady family Christmas cards almost never get in the mail on time. I'm amazed by, and admittedly jealous of, those families who have their Christmas cards ready to mail by Thanksgiving weekend. We're just not that organized. Then there is the added deliberation about who to include, what pictures to use, and the questions about when your kids' families become their own unit and are no longer included. I'm never certain of the etiquette.

Family Christmas card photos often capture those brief moments during the year when everything seems to be perfect, if only for an instant. Everyone looks joyful, at peace, and harmonious. For some, a professional photographer captures that image. Life is rarely as perfect as we want it to appear. So at Christmas we work extra hard to make our lives look the way we think they should, with accomplishments chronicled and Photoshop pictures, decorations artfully displayed in our homes, and best wishes for love and peace and joy for the world. The fruits of the Spirit (love, joy peace, patience...) meant to emerge from within our faith, become merely ornaments that we skillfully manage to "hang" just long enough for the picture, before things deteriorate the normal chaos of life.

Taking a closer look at the biblical snapshot of Jesus' birth, I'm reminded that the world Jesus was born into was not some sentimental, sanitized world where stables don't smell like stables and childbirth isn't

enormously risky, painful, and messy. It was a real world where kindness is hard to come by, and people are too distracted by trying to make a living to notice or appreciate life itself. A world where we are more intrigued by either what we can do or what we can't do – than we are with what God might be up to. It was a world where many were bored with the routine of it all, or had grown intolerant of new ideas that shake up the way things are, or

so accustomed to seeing things the way they expect to see them – that they become blind to any other reality – even one that is breaking in all around them. It was in that kind of world – this kind of world – that something so simple and yet so magnificent happened that it still commands

the world's attention this Christmas!

So when you look at those Christmas cards this year, remember that just off the edge of the glossy images you see in the pictures, is more of the real story. And it is precisely in the real story of our lives where the saving work of Jesus Christ can be found, if we will only make room for him there. That is the joy of Christmas. "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life." Christmas celebrates not that we have found God, but that God has found us. Joy to the world!

In Christ,

Rev. Jeffrey V. O'Grady, Pastor



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Community Church Women



Join CCW on *Friday, December 9 in Westminster Hall* as they welcome Interim Director of Christian Education Dr. Lisa Lamb. Lisa is also an affiliate member of the faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary, teaching Homiletics and Communication courses. She will share about how God led and ministered to her through a recent difficult season, and the lessons she carries with her from that time.

Also on the program will be Christmas music provided by the SMCC Nursery School children.

In January: Pray the Devil Back to Hell
Friday, January 13, 2012, 10:15 am,
Westminster Hall

Pray the Devil Back to Hell, the compelling film documenting a peace movement called Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace, will be shown at the first CW meeting of the New Year. The peace movement brought

to an end the horrific civil war raging in Liberia 1989-1996 and 1999-2003.

Organized by social worker Leymah Gbowee, the non-violent movement started with praying and singing in a Monrovia fish market. It expanded from Christian congregations to include the nation's Muslim women. Soon the women, always dressed in white, became a powerful political movement. It resolved the civil conflict and led to the election of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the first woman president of Liberia. The film has been used as an advocacy tool in conflict zones, such as Sudan, to mobilize African women to petition for peace and security.

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and Leymah Gbowee will be awarded the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo Saturday, December 10, 2011.

Refreshments will be served at 10:15 am. All women of the congregation are invited.



An Opportunity To “Just Do Good!”

Saturday, January 28, 2012

The Compton Initiative is an opportunity for a “renovation of the heart” experience for individuals, their families, and friends. Participants from many area churches will be given supplies and direction for a project such as painting, planting flowers, picking up trash, or some other task to bring restoration and hope to the community of Compton. It's just half a day and all ages are welcome.

San Marino Community Church participants will meet in the church parking lot at 6:15 am to carpool and will return in the early afternoon. Plenty of safe parking will be provided for this highly organized project. For more information visit justdogood.org.

To RSVP or for information contact Outreach@smccpby.com or (626) 799-7900.



Come to the Quiet: Advent Quiet Afternoon Apart

Friday, December 16, 12:30 – 3:30 pm, Christ Chapel and Church Lounge

So often the busyness of holiday preparations sucks the joy out of life. Jesus, the Christ Child, is the source of joy, which does not depend on anyone's circumstances. Join the Rev. Karen Berns for a contemplative time of recharging spiritual batteries and increasing joy. Beginning in

the chapel, filled with windows depicting our Lord's life, through scripture, art, and music, participants will open themselves to God's Holy Spirit – restoring joy.

\$5.00 reserves a place and provides resources. Contact EFarrar@smccpby.com or (626) 282-4181 x 10 to register.

NEWS, NEWS, NEWS

All the latest activities and events

Gifts Of Securities

SMCC members and friends are encouraged to obtain instructions for donating securities from the church office at (626) 282-4181 x 12, SkipOM@smccpby.com, or online at <http://www.smccpby.com/Welcome/giving.html>. Gifts should be initiated by December 16 to ensure transfer is complete by the end of the year. (RBC remains the church's investment manager.)

Union Station Service Opportunity

Sunday, December 11, evening

In place of Overtime and Light, Student Ministries will prepare and serve a meal at Union Station. Five to ten students are sought to meet at the church and then serve at Union Station! Contact RMcKenzie@smccpby.com.

Giving Envelopes for 2012

Regular contributors are encouraged to use offering envelopes to assure their gifts are properly accounted for. Those who do not currently have envelopes may request a box for 2012 from the church office at (626) 282-4181 x 17 or LBourgeois@smccpby.com. 2011 envelopes will also be distributed at worship in December.

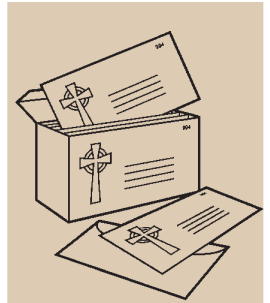
Men's Breakfast Meets & Eats

Wednesdays, 7:00 am Breakfast, 7:30 am Discussion – Fellowship Hall

12/7 – Matt Ballantine, S.M. City Manager
12/14 – Rev. O'Grady leads the discussion
12/21 & 12/28 – at Colonial Kitchen
January Wednesdays will be back at SMCC.

Save The Date

Foundation Grants Presented: January 15, 2012
71st Anniversary Sunday: January 22, 2012
New Member Class - February, 2012 (date TBD)
Couples' Retreat: March 2-3, 2012



Fall Stewardship Campaign Sees Strong Commitment

Members and friends of the church presented their estimates of giving for the 2012 general fund budget on Stewardship Sunday, October 23, bringing them forward to the communion table during the final hymn. As of November 15, over 240 individuals and families have committed over \$1,210,000 to God's work through San Marino Community Church.

Session has reviewed a preliminary budget based on these results. It will finalize the 2012 budget on December 21. Additional

support is needed to avoid some cuts to program, facility care, and staffing. Those who have not yet responded may do so by mail or by contacting the business manager at (626) 282-4181 x 12 or SkipOM@smccpby.com.

Two key stewardship goals for the church are 1) to involve more of the church's 717 member families in the ongoing financial support of the congregation's mission and ministry and 2) for those who give to deepen their commitment as God leads and their circumstances allow.

Christmas Mission Market - The Results!

On Sunday, November 13, members and friends of the church gathered in Fellowship Hall and Church Lounge to make purchases of gifts with a heart. Over \$3,601 was raised in donations and over \$3,500.00 in sales of merchandise for eleven mission partners from Pasadena to Africa and Latin America, and around the world. the 4th & 5th grade Church School

class raised \$282 at their bake sale to support Ministry of Hope. Shoppers also enjoyed popcorn and doughnuts as well as time at the petting zoo.

The Outreach Team will hold mission market "Extensions" on Sundays, November 20 & 27 and additionally gifts cards are available in the church business office through the Christmas holiday.



Kirkin' O' The Tartans

On Reformation Sunday, October 30, San Marino Community Church celebrated its Protestant heritage with a special worship service remembering the days when clansfolk brought their tartans to worship secretly for a blessing.



Thirty five individuals processed into worship led by members of the Pasadena Scots Pipes and Drums. Clan names were read and blessings were said. Many more stood and were blessed in their pews.

Rev. O'Grady's sermon celebrated many important reformers and made connections with the underground Church in China.

Many thanks to all those who contributed leadership including Dr. Robert Armstrong who took the lead in many aspects of the morning.



December 2011/January
2012 Edition

Sunday Schedule:

9:15 *Traditional Worship
& ELEMENT*

10:30 *Spiritual Formation
for all ages*

11:15 *"The Gathering"
(casual worship
service)*

12/25/11 & 1/1/12
*Only one family-
friendly worship
service at 10:00 am
each Sunday*

Deadline for February 2012
Issue: Tuesday, January 10,
2012



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COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

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Adult Spiritual Formation

20 Centuries of Church History

Sundays, November 27 & December 11, 10:30 am, Fellowship Hall

Join the fifty plus enthusiastic adults who are enjoyably learning and being reminded of key people and events that shape today's world. Dr. Ray Albrekson, who teaches around the world, will focus on the Reformation through the 20th century on the final two classes in this illuminating series.



To view or review the first two classes, so you're not missing any important events or people, visit www.smccpby.com and follow the links to the YouTube videos of earlier classes.

Advent Celebration, Christmas, and New Year's Day

Sundays, December 4, December 25, & January 1

On Sunday, December 4, all ages are invited to participate in the Advent Celebration.



There will be no Adult Spiritual Formation class on Christmas and New Year's Day. San Marino Community Church will celebrate the holidays with one 10:00 am family-friendly worship service each Sunday.

Bailey DVD on New Testament Women

Sundays, January 8, 15, 22, 10:30 am, Fellowship Hall

Do you know Deborah, Hulda, Junia, Lydia, and Priscilla? Discover parts of scripture often overlooked or discounted. Renowned Presbyterian author, professor, pastor, and scholar, Dr. Kenneth Bailey illuminates scriptural understandings of women in leadership of God's people and the Church via DVD.



Chinese New Year's Celebration

Sundays, January 29, 10:30 am, Fellowship Hall

Gong Xi Fa Cai! (Happy New Year!) Celebrate the Year of the Dragon with a Chinese New Year presentation by the church's Conversational English Class students and faculty. Come for traditional Chinese food, displays, performances, and lucky red envelopes!

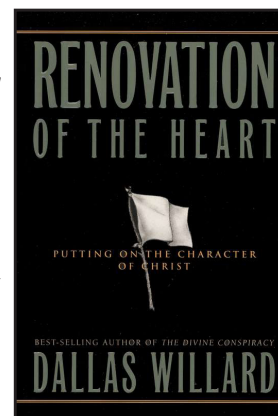
Renovation of the Heart Studies Continue

Tuesdays, 6:00 – 7:00 pm, Fellowship Hall, Fridays, 10:00 – 11:15 am, Library

And in small groups meeting at various times and places

Renovation of the Heart by U.S.C.'s Dallas Willard offers practical, tried-and-true practices for growing in faith and being transformed to be more like Christ as the unique persons God created us to be. Join one of these welcoming classes or a small group and journey together as you open your heart, mind, body, relationships, and life to newness in the new year! Questions? Contact the Rev. Karen Berns at KBerns@smccpby.com or (626) 282-4181 x 20.

Classes meet through December 2, Reconvening January 10 and 13



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Christmas Flower Fund



The church family is invited to contribute to the Christmas Flower Fund to help add to the beauty of the sanctuary during the holidays. Contributors are listed in the Christmas Eve bulletin and gifts may be designated in memory or honor of a loved one. To make a donation, please send a check (marked "Flower Fund" in the memo line) to the church office no later than Monday, December 12, 2011 to be included in the bulletin.



Christmas Flower Fund

Donation \$ _____ Envelope # _____

Provided by _____

In honor of _____

In memory of _____

Please return this form with your check to SMCC by Monday, December 12, 2011.
San Marino Community Church • 1750 Virginia Road • San Marino, CA 91108