

RIDGE READER SPECIAL EDITION

DECEMBER 2011



Dear Friends,

Christmas is a time of traditions. Lighting candles and singing “Silent Night.” Cocoa after caroling. Special ornaments on the tree, and special cookies on the plate. Many of us have traditions that have been passed down in our families for many years, and we treasure the memories they evoke.

Around the church, we too have traditions, going back not just generations but centuries! The Advent Wreath. Our songs. The use of greens for decorating. The manger scene and the story of the shepherds and the angels. This is an incredibly meaningful, rich and deep time for us, a time when we recall why we are who we are. Celebrating Christmas recalls the roots of our faith.

And yet, the meaning of all these old rituals and celebrations is that God is doing something *new*! The tired, worn-out weary world receives its Savior as a new-born babe. With His birth, the world is changed and made into something different. We get a chance to start fresh and re-discover the possibility and potential God has placed in each of us. We say it every week, and at Christmas it becomes even more meaningful: “Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation. The old life has gone; a new life has begun.”

This is the paradox of the Christian life. We keep seeking new ways to present our ancient truths. We continue looking for new meaning in what we have known for years. We go on digging into our history and tradition for new insights and perspectives. “Reformed, yet always reforming,” we witness to the truth that God’s first act was creation, and God is creating still.

Sometimes it seems that we’re a bit confused about what is new, what is old, and which is “better.” Our world is changing, rapidly!, and since Katrina, a lot of things just don’t work the way they used to. In order to keep up with life as we know it, we keep having to change everything and come up with new ways of doing things that used to be routine. It can be bewildering, and somewhat exhausting. But it’s also a chance to take to heart Paul’s words and dream together about what we want our new life to be. It’s an opportunity to do some things better, and to let go of some things that don’t work at all. Metairie itself is different: what are the hurts and hopes of this different community? How can we minister to a new neighborhood in a new way?

One thing we know: our old, old story of promise, hope, and restoration is still relevant, still needed, and still meaningful. And so, like Matthew’s scribe, we “bring out of our treasure what is new and what is old.” (Mt. 15:42) The star still shines, the angels still sing, and we still welcome God’s good news of a life made new. “O come, let us adore Him!”

Wishing you peace,
Pastor Martha

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Saying good bye to the Dolfsma Family

At the end of December, Rene, Ineke, and Paulus will be moving back to the Netherlands. They have enjoyed the 3 years that they stayed here in Metairie and working in the New Orleans area. As a “thank you” for all our trust and support to them, they will host one more “Dutch Fellowship” on Dec. 18th after Worship Service. Everyone is invited and they hope to see you all there.

The Advent Candles and Wreath

This year the Advent candles will be lit by families and friends of MRPC, representing all age groups, long time and new members. The candles represent ‘hope’, ‘peace’, ‘joy’, ‘love’ and in the middle stands the Christ candle. The wreath itself is a circle reminding us of the perfection and eternity of God. It is decorated with evergreen branches. Evergreen is a symbol of eternity, but also of life. Holly is sometimes used instead of - or with - the evergreen. The sharp points of the leaves of the Holly remind us of Christ’s crown of thorns. The red berries remind us of his blood. There is a story that holly berries were white until Christ’s blood fell on them - causing them to be red ever since. Christ is the light of the world and is represented by the center candle.

Carol Singing for our shut-ins

Wednesday night December 21st we will join to go out and visit some of our homebound congregational members to sing carols at their places. We’ve been doing this for the last two years and all who joined remember the good times. Everyone is welcome to join in, even if you’re not the best singer. We will gather at 5pm in the fellowship hall and share some light food before hitting the road. Leaving approx 5.20pm. Be on the lookout for a ‘sign-up sheet’ on the coffee table. We like to have a headcount of who to be on the lookout for and how much food to bring.

Candlelight Communion Service

On Christmas Eve we will start carol singing by request at 4.30pm. Everyone is welcome to make their request known. (The only restriction we have is that we don’t sing the song during the Christmas Eve Service.) The Candlelight Communion Worship Service will start at 5pm. It will be a service with lessons and carols. Members and friends of MRPC will read the Scripture and choir and congregation will take turns in making a joyful sound. We will celebrate Holy Communion and all light their own candle.

Christmas Day

This year Christmas Day is a Sunday. So we get an extra chance to celebrate the birth of our lord Jesus. Worship Service will be at 10.30 am and followed with cake during the time of fellowship.

New Year’s Day

We may start 2012 in the best way you can imagine, being in communion with God and another. This will be a special service that starts at 10.30am. Come, praise God for all the good things that He will guide you through in the year to come. Pledge your allegiance to Him on this first day of the New Year. Before and after the Worship Service there will be plenty of time to wish each other happy new year.