

THE HIGHLANDS



Merry Christmas!

Advent Services

Advent Services will be held at noon on Wednesdays, December 2, 9, 16, and 23rd in the Sanctuary. These 30-minute occasions are the perfect way to recover from the hectic pace of the holidays and put meaning back into Christmas. After the service, everyone is invited to a soup and sandwich luncheon. The cost is \$5.00 for lunch.

Family Worship

Sunday, Dec. 20th

Join us at The Church in the Highlands on Sunday, Dec. 20th for a special worship service for families

Christmas Pageant

Saturday, Dec. 19th, 7 pm

All children, young and old, are invited to come and participate in our pageant! This year, our congregation will be joining with Ridgeview UCC and Chatterton Hills UCC to present "The First Christmas: A Christmas Pageant" on Saturday, December 19th, at 7 pm.

White Gift Service

Sunday, Dec. 13th

Please help us fill a child's heart with joy! Please look at the gift list and bring your *unwrapped* gifts to the December 13th service. If you wish to make a monetary donation, checks should be made payable to the *Police Columbia Association of Westchester, Inc.* and "St. Mary's" indicated on the memo line of your check.

NEEDED are WHITE socks of all sizes, Barbies, action figures, cars/trucks, hats, mittens, scarves, coloring books, crayons, books and children's CD's.

Your help in making sure that every child has a wonderful, joyous and happy holiday is greatly appreciated.

Christmas Eve Services

Thursday, Dec. 24th

Family Service: 4 pm

Candlelight Vigil: 11 pm

All are welcome!

At a glance...

World's AIDS Day	Dec. 1
Advent Series	Dec. 2,9,16, 23: 12 pm
White Gift Service	Dec. 13
Christmas Pageant	Dec. 19: 7 pm
Family Worship Service	Dec. 20
Christmas Eve Services	Dec. 24: 4 & 11 pm

Joy to the World!



**World AIDS Day Event for
Westchester County
Tuesday, Dec. 1st**

A *World AIDS Day Event* will be held on Tuesday, December 1st, from 7–9 pm at Good Counsel Gymnasium in White Plains, sponsored by the Westchester Coalition on Global Poverty and AIDS. The event will include exhibits, music, a candlelight vigil, and speakers, including Letty Chiwara, the Director of Global Programs at the United Nations Development Fund for Women. Admission is free.

**Pub Theology
Wednesday, Dec. 2nd**

Join us Wednesday, December 2nd at 5:30 PM, at The Lazy Boy Saloon, 154 Mamaroneck Avenue, White Plains, as we seek an intelligent and intelligible way of talking about the transcendent over a pint of beer. All friends of God’s creation are welcome to participate in the conversation. Please RSVP to Pub Theology at www.meetup.com.

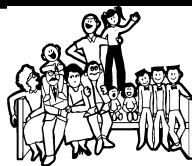
Bible Study

Please join us for bible study at 10.00 a.m. and 7.30 p.m. each Tuesday in the Wheelock Room. At 10 AM, join us as we engage in a “Bible Workbench” discussion based on the Lectionary texts. At 7:30 join us as we discuss Marcus Borg’s thought provoking book, “Jesus: Uncovering the Life, Teachings, and Relevance of a Religious Revolutionary.”

**Special Music
Sunday, Dec. 13th**

On December 13th, we will be welcoming Dr. Richard Cirulli, guitarist, who will be playing special Offertory music during the service.

Views From the Pews



Every Sunday and Thursday evening, you may see “Views From the Pews” at 7:00 p.m. on cable channel 76 and on FIOS channel 45

Invitation from the Choir

Choir will meet on Sunday mornings at 9:00. All are welcome to join us!

Staff Meeting

If you have concerns and/or calendar items that must come to the staff’s attention, please contact the office to add them to the agenda.

Church League Cookbook

The Church League needs your recipes for their community garden companion cookbook. They are accepting “green,” all natural, seasonal and organic recipes. They are also having a “name the cookbook” contest. See Lorraine for details.

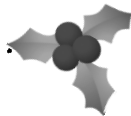
Service Opportunities

We need you to play an important role in our worship services - to join the lay readers team contact Bob Gravely; to join the ushers team contact Rob Essick; to be a Communion server, contact Mimi Nacario.

From the Altar Guild

If you would like to order flowers to beautify the sanctuary for a particular Sunday, please call our Altar Guild chair, Debbie Oleson at (914) 328-8453.

For unto us, a Child is born...



...And on earth, Peace, goodwill to All...

From the Pastor's Desk...

The Perfect Present

Love and memory last and will so endure till the game is called because of darkness.

-Gene Fowler

How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings.

Matthew 23:37

I love presents. I always have. Probably because my mother made a huge deal over birthdays and holidays. She had the ability to make me feel like queen for the day, like I was the most important person on the face of the earth. It wasn't that she threw a big party; no ponies when I was growing up, no theme parties, no sleep overs. Just mom, somehow loving me a little bit more than she did on every other day. Just mom waking me up to the smell of freshly baked cinnamon rolls. Just mom smiling saying "Good morning." "Happy birthday!" "I love you!" "Make a wish!" "You can do anything!" "You can be anything!" "You are the greatest!" "Happy Birthday!"

It wasn't even the presents that made birthdays and holidays huge. I'd have a hard time telling you what I got for most birthdays, so it wasn't the presents. It was mom's unique brand of special. Somehow, though, presents got connected to these special days. Those wonderful, empowering phrases that left my mom's lips somehow, in my mind, got wrapped up in tissue paper and bows. When my birthday rolls around now I can't wait for the big box from Nebraska to arrive on my door step. It makes me feel like a kid again. It connects me to my mom and memory.

So you can imagine my glee when I met a man on the train recently, who was carrying a beautifully wrapped gift. He put the package, along with his overcoat in the luggage rack above the seat. He sat down next to me and I couldn't resist. I forget exactly what I said, something like, "Beautiful package, who's the lucky recipient?" He

said, "Oh, it's mine, I received it earlier this evening." I was flabbergasted! I said, "And you haven't opened it yet?" "No," he said, "just one more useless thing. Perhaps I'll save it for the next holiday." "Next holiday?" I replied in horror! "Yeah, he said, what is it? Thanksgiving?!"

We didn't talk the rest of the ride. I sat there trying to figure out why someone wouldn't open a gift, wouldn't rip (well, in this case, perhaps, gently remove the beautiful paper) open the treasure with great anticipation! Why would someone wait one week? One month? Is his life that busy? Are there that many other pleasures, that this seems trivial? Honestly, it quite baffled me.

And then I realized that maybe he's onto something. "Another useless thing," he said. Really, who needs more stuff? Perhaps what he was craving was my mom's unique kind of special, those wonderful, empowering phrases that left my mom's lips, not more stuff wrapped up in tissue paper and bows. "You can do anything!" "You can be anything!" "You are the greatest!"

Things and love are not synonymous. Everyday we have the choice to offer Mom's unique kind of special, love instead of things. Words, filled with kindness and care, are transformational. The best kind of gift.

Merry Christmas!





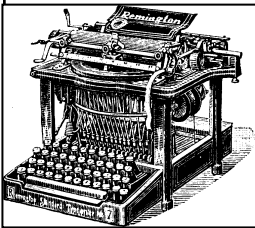
...let your heart be light.

Nursery School News

As always, the children in the preschool are full of energy and excitement. Everyone enjoyed having a Halloween party in their classroom and the AM 4's had their annual Halloween parade. We are now getting ready for Thanksgiving. The feasts have been planned and the children are learning about what makes Thanksgiving special. A teepee and ship were made in the AM 4's class and the 2's and 3's are have been busy making turkey's and other seasonal art projects to cele-

Submit an Article to The Highlands

Send or e-mail (info@churchinhighlands.org) your



article to the church office marked "For Highlands." Be sure to include your name and phone number. Any articles submitted after the 15th of the month will appear in the next

issue of the Highlands.

Important Telephone Numbers & Addresses

Pastor — Melanie Miller

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(914) 671-5390 (cell)

mmiller@churchinhighlands.org

Moderator — Tony Casinelli—(914) 997-1506

Vice Moderator — Gary Vaughan—(914) 328-0687

Treasurer — Veda Szkolar—(914) 682-4728

Director of Music —Dr. Robert A. Chase

(914) 946-8126

Altar Guild —Debbie Oleson—(914) 328-8453

Church Office—(914) 949-2023

Church Office Fax — (914) 686-2816

Church e-mail — Info@churchinhighlands.org

Web Site —www.churchinhighlands.org

www.churchinhighlands.com

Early Childhood Center (Nursery School) —

Amy O'Donnell

(914) 946-6132

Ecc@churchinhighlands.org

Environmental Justice

Which Is Greener, a Real or Fake Christmas Tree?

By Brian Clark Howard from *The Daily Green; The consumer's guide to the green revolution.*

For many families, the centerpiece of Christmas celebrations is the luminous, awe-inspiring tree set up with care in the living room. But with all the options now available, how do you know which Christmas tree is the greenest choice for the environment?

It depends on a number of factors, including where you live, how you celebrate and precisely what you buy. So there is no one-size-fits-all answer.

Going with a real tree? Try to choose something locally and organically grown. You'll cut down on CO2 emissions and help prevent the environmental degradation wrought by pesticides on big conventional operations. *Local Harvest* features a list of beautiful live Christmas tree providers across the country. If you like, you may even be able to cut your own! When you are finished with your tree, make sure it is converted to mulch or compost.

Going with an artificial tree? Then try to find one made in the U.S., which greatly decreases the chances for contamination with lead or other toxins, preserves domestic manufacturing jobs and reduces shipping. For example, check out Holiday Tree and Trim Co. of New Jersey. If you must get rid of your artificial tree, check with local charities, shelters and churches to see if they can use it. Most recycling programs do not accept them, and they'll take many centuries to degrade in landfills.

Want an even more "clear cut" answer? Buy a living, plantable "bulb" tree. Inside, the tree can wear ornaments and garland, and after Christmas it can be transplanted outdoors. You'll be adding to the planet's lungs and fighting global warming, as well as providing wildlife habitat. If you live in an apartment, or don't have room in your yard for an ever-green, see if you can donate it to someplace in your community.

