

...from the Heart

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I would like to start by wishing all of you a wonderful Advent season and a very Merry Christmas!

Now, as a child, I was always excited whenever I arrived home to find we had a visitor; an Aunt or an Uncle, a Cousin! I love being surprised. I love gifts that do not require wrapping paper and bows but come wrapped in flesh. And isn't that what Christmas is all about?

Christmas, a child is born! I can't help but think the gift the Father gave, was strangely wrapped. The expected, long-awaited Savior, should have been born into a palace, covered in a colorful robe, wearing a glittering crown. But instead, he was born in a barn, cloaked in strips of cloth, and His head adorned with hay. It was the equivalent of wrapping that special Christmas gift, your child was waiting for, in plain brown paper, without any bow or ribbon. However, in no way did the presentation of the Christ-child diminish the precious contents of our heavenly Father's gift, His salvation!

This Christmas, maybe we should take a page from our Father's book. Wrapped within, what the world would consider the plain "paper" of our everyday lives, is the most precious of gifts, saving faith in Christ. Saving because it transforms, extends hope, offers confidence and strength when there's none to be found! Why just now, one of the women of our church left my office. I can tell you that she is making a difference in the life of a family in our church and then some! Amazingly, it seems a small thing to her, but let me tell you it's HUGE.

Through the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of Christmas, we possess the loving presence of the living God; the Gift no one should go without this Christmas and every day of their lives. This Christmas, this coming year, how might we live out God's love? What act of kindness and generosity may we offer to others that would make a difference in their lives? Look around you; who do you see in need? Along with whatever simple, practical gift we may be able to offer them, let us also unwrap our hearts. In doing so may we reveal our deep and abiding faith and love of Christ.

Let us love our neighbor as ourselves.

We can love because He first loved us. - 1 John 4:19 (NIV)

God bless you, and may you have a great start to your New Year!

Live and love.

Pastor Vin

In Praise of Our Pastors



"On Sunday, October 20th we celebrated our pastors with a brunch and custom cake; a small token of our gratitude for their devotion to us at PNC. They are gifts to us from God. I have personally known Pastors Nick & John and their wives, Corinne and Jen, for close to 30 years. I am enjoying getting to know Pastor Vinnie and Kathy better as we enter our second year with him at the helm of our congregation. Each is uniquely gifted and qualified. Each has a heart full of love for the Lord, and us who are under their care and authority. Each has been placed in their area of ministry and leadership by God.

Pastor Vinnie is our senior pastor and the head of our congregation. On his shoulders rests the enormous responsibility of faithfully living and administering the Word of God to all of us.

Pastor Nick is our associate pastor and worship leader. He brings us to the spiritually deep places of praising and adoring Jesus through music.

Pastor John is our assistant pastor and a gifted teacher. He brings light and simplicity to the weighty truths of Scripture without lessening its power, holiness, and authority.

Do we appreciate how incredible it is for our small congregation to have *three* Spirit-filled pastors in our midst? Do we appreciate the fact that, when they minister, preach, sing, and teach, Satan doubles down on his efforts to nullify their words and actions? Pray for them and their families.

A study at Pastoralcareinc.com* stated that, while " ...90% of pastors believe they are called and in the place God has called them..." , many pastors suffer from burnout, feelings of isolation, inadequacy, fatigue, and stress.

What are *we* doing, individually and as a congregation, to grow up in Christ under their leadership instead of making their calling and job harder than it should be? How are we laboring *alongside* them, instead of placing greater burdens on them? Where can we find ways to provide the support they need to be successful?

In looking at the closing statements of several of his epistles, the Apostle Paul thanked specific people who had been particularly diligent in assisting him in his work. He called them helpers, laborers, a succorer (patroness and protector), fellow-prisoners, faithful ministers, neck-riskers, and fellow-workers. In other words, they were those who worked very hard to help Paul accomplish the calling God had placed on his life. Let's endeavor to be counted among them in our own church family as we strive alongside our pastors. We are all fellow-laborers in God's service, and we are called to serve one another. Galatians 6: 2-10 *NLT/NKJV*



*<https://www.pastoralcareinc.com/statistics/>

<https://www.pastoralcareinc.com/statistics/clarification-on-statistics/>

Blessings, Peace, and Joy!

Sue Cerruto

REVERSE ADVENT CALENDAR

Each day add an item to a box.

On Christmas Eve donate the contents to a food bank.

PASSIONATEPENNYPINCHER.COM

December 1 - box of cereal
December 2 - peanut butter
December 3 - stuffing mix
December 4 - boxed potatoes
December 5 - macaroni and cheese
December 6 - canned fruit
December 7 - canned tomatoes
December 8 - canned tuna
December 9 - dessert mix
December 10 - jar of applesauce
December 11 - canned sweet potatoes
December 12 - cranberry sauce
December 13 - canned beans
December 14 - box of crackers
December 15 - package of rice
December 16 - package of oatmeal
December 17 - package pasta
December 18 - spaghetti sauce
December 19 - chicken noodle soup
December 20 - tomato soup
December 21 - can corn
December 22 - can mixed vegetables
December 23 - can carrots
December 24 - can green beans

The Spirit of Giving

A highly educated Southern woman named Lottie Moon headed to China in 1873 after rejecting a

marriage proposal.

She served as a missionary there

for almost 40

years, enduring tough conditions and meager resources. Through detailed letters home, Moon conveyed the “desperate need” for more workers.

To honor Moon, in 1918 the Southern Baptist Convention renamed its annual missions collection for her. The Lottie Moon Christmas Offering commemorates the dedicated missionary who once asked:

“Is not the festive season when families and friends exchange gifts in memory of The Gift laid on the altar of the world for the redemption of the human race the most appropriate time to consecrate a portion from abounding riches and scant poverty to send forth the good tidings of great joy into all the earth?”



As of this writing, we have been blessed to provide turkeys and all the trimmings for 25 families to celebrate Thanksgiving this year.

Thank you for your food and monetary donations.

FOOD PANTRY

OPEN: MON, WED, FRI

10AM - 2PM

65 Franklin St. (HPYC Building)

Rear Entrance

*“...for I was hungry and you gave me food,
I was thirsty and you gave me drink,
I was a Stranger and you welcomed me...”*

Matthew 25:35 (ESV)

A TALE OF TWO LIVES

A CHRISTMAS STORY



Jack, a volunteer fireman, was the first to arrive on the scene, before House number 7 fire truck and firefighters, before the fire itself. Incredibly, Jack was there even before his personal fire responder buzzed and couldn't explain why, but let's not get too far ahead of the story.

House 7 Fire brigade fought valiantly against the freezing temperatures and roaring flames that night, pouring endless gallons of water into the burning shell of the diminutive two story house. To be clear, this wasn't just any night, it was Christmas Eve, a night that had haunted Jack for years. Seven Christmas Eves ago his wife and child perished in a house fire while he stood by helpless to save them. Jack's easy going nature perished in that fire. He became bitter, angry with God and the world. He had relived the fiery nightmare every Christmas Eve since, unable to forgive himself, wishing he'd died in that fire with them. This was his reason for joining Firehouse 7; having failed to save his own family, he was determined to save others.

Emily's landlord, an impatient man, had already petitioned the court for papers of eviction. One could hardly blame the man as it had been a year since her last payment. Emily's financial struggles dated back nearly two years earlier when her husband Dan lost his job. Dan's company made it clear: the layoff was the result of the poor economy not Dan's work performance but this was of little consequence to a family struggling to put food on the table. Dan started eating smaller portions then skipping entire meals attempting to stretch family provisions. After months of searching, the only place that offered employment was the city lumber company. The job lacked benefits, barely paid minimum wage and came with considerable risk.

Emily tried to talk him out of it. "The job they're offering took the life of the last man who worked there!" she stated with alarm. Dan understood the risk but what choice did he have?

"Our savings are gone; your part time job barely pays for groceries. Desperate times call for desperate measures," he concluded and accepted the offer. The meager income from that job helped the family scrape their way through Christmas. But just six weeks later another fatal logging accident took Dan's life. Emily was terrified.

A year later on Christmas Eve, Emily was despondent. She had been served a notice of eviction, had no money to buy Christmas gifts, food or heating fuel. Dazed, she sat with her three children gazing blankly out the window at the silently falling snow. They huddled together wearing coats, hats and blanket wrappings trying to stay warm. *Desperate times require desperate measures*, Dan's words echoed in Emily's despondent mind. Brushing back a tear she turned on the kitchen stove then returned to the children pulling them close to her; the way a mother bird shelters her young under its wings. "We'll soon be toasty warm," she said trying to cheer up the children.

Moments before the fire started, Emily prayed a silent prayer, partially out of anger partially of confusion. "God we need your help, where are you?" fighting back tears. "Why won't you answer my prayer?" she whispered. Suddenly the frigid room was raging hot. Emily was frantic; smoke blurred her vision and avenue of escape.

At that exact moment two arms reached through the smoke gathering up the children, "Hurry," said a deep voice, "follow me." It was Jack, who had mysteriously arrived at Emily's front door just seconds before the fire started. Carrying the children in his arms, Emily followed him down the staircase outside to safety.

That Christmas Eve marked the beginning of a new life for all of them. Having rescued Emily and her children from the fire, Jack didn't let it end there; he became their advocate and protector. As the months passed, Emily and Jack's friendship progressed to an engagement, marriage and adoption. As Jack's heart continued to heal it slowly became clear to him: it was God who was the real hero that fiery Christmas Eve, not him. The unexplained urgency that compelled him that *silent night* was in fact God's Spirit directing him to a place he's never been, to a fire before it began, while answering a prayer, Emily's prayer, before it had even been spoken.

The lips that uttered them may be closed to death, the heart that felt them may have ceased to beat, but prayers live before God, and God's heart is set on them - prayers outlive the lives of those who uttered them; they outlive a generation, outlive an age, outlive a world. E.M. Bounds

*Merry Christmas,
Pastor John*





WOMENS MINISTRY

The months have flown by

as the women continue to gather

each week either on Tuesday evenings or Thursday mornings.

We have been reading the Daily Bread devotion for those particular days instead of doing a book study. Prayer continues to be a big focus,

and the needs this year have been many. We have been blessed to hear many answers to the petitions we have brought before the Lord. Each week we put a little money into our gift fund, and as of this writing we have \$501 to use to buy items that we choose from the

Samaritan's Purse catalog. With a few more weeks to go, I am sure we will increase that amount and be able to really bless many in need.

By the time this newsletter is sent out, we will have already had our Packing Party to fill shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child.

Everyone has been very generous this year and our collection closet is filled with many wonderful items. Not only has our congregation given things, but we also received dresses, flip-flops and drinking cups from people outside of our church.

On Saturday, December 14th at 9:30am, we will have a Ladies Brunch/Craft day.

We will enjoy a meal together and then do a Christmas craft that Corinne has hand-picked for us. She has promised that it is going to be nice and simple.

I will send out a reminder and RSVP so we will have enough for all the women who would like to attend. Be sure to sign up and join us for a fun time together.

As the holiday season draws near, it can be filled with many emotions.

For those of us who know and love Jesus, it is a time of joy as we remember His birth as the Promised Messiah. For others, it can be filled with sadness depending on the circumstances they are going through. Either way, we often become stressed and frazzled as we try to shop, cook and bake our way into exhaustion. Wouldn't it be nice if we all toned down our "busyness" and focused on what the season is all about!? Sharing the LOVE that came on Christmas with our families, friends and those who don't know Jesus would surely put a smile on our Lord's face. I hope you will join the challenge with me in slowing down the holiday pace and truly have a very

Happy Christmas and blessed New Year.

Love in Christ,
Mary Ann



181 Boxes for 2019

Weekly Schedule

Subject to Change

WINTER

Sunday

10am - Service - Nursery available
10:45am - Children's Sunday School - Fellowship Hall
10:45am - Teen Bible Study - HPYC Building
First Sunday of Month - Holy Communion & Family Sunday

Monday

7pm - 1st & 3rd Monday of the month - **September through May** –
M.E.N. (Men's Encouragement Network) - Fellowship Hall

Tuesday

7pm - Every Tuesday - Ladies-In-Touch at Mary Ann Malcolm's Home

Wednesday

7pm - Bible Study - Fellowship Hall

Thursday

10am - Every Thursday - Ladies Prayer & Bible Study Group - HPYC Building
7pm - 3rd Thursday of the month-**Sept-Nov; March-June** - Ladies Sewing Circle

Friday

6:30pm - Worship Team practice in the Sanctuary

Saturday

8am - 1st Saturday of the month - **September - June** - Men's Breakfast - Fellowship Hall
For other Winter meetings, events, & activities, consult your Sunday Bulletin.



Coming Up...

December 2019 **MERRY CHRISTMAS!**

December 1 - First Sunday of Advent
December 22 - First Day of Winter
December 24 - Christmas Eve Service 2pm
December 25 - Christmas Day
December 31 - New Year's Eve

January 2020 **HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

January 1 - New Year's Day
January 20 - Martin Luther King Junior Day

February **HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY!**

February 14 - Valentine's Day
February 17 - President's Day
February 26 - Ash Wednesday

*Congratulation Water Baptism Recipients
Mary Ann Abrams, Desiree Boutsikos,
Jennifer Crosby, Mackenzie CaSpisa,
Victoria Ca Spisa,
Aiden Manteram, and Diane Sarlo.*

- Baby Dedication -
Robinson Richard Fasano
Dedicated to the Lord on September 22, 2019.
Born on December 10, 2018
to Rich and Kara Fasano, was welcomed by big
sisters Kiara and Karai Faith.

*Gene DeBernardo on the passing of his wife Joanne Trama in September,
Pastor Vin & Kathy Cinguiti on the passing of Kathy's Mom, Rose Marie Butler in October,
and to Mary Ann Mavridis on the passing of her brother, Angelo Cennamo in November.*

Be Still and Know that I Am God (Ps. 46:10)

While we were on vacation in S.C., we stayed at a resort on the ocean. In our view from the balcony was an estuary. It filled as the tide rose and depleted as the tide went out. All of the vacationers were walking with heads down looking for something, but we didn't know what. Again, the tide rose and ebbed.



The estuary remained the same. It filled and it emptied, day after day.

We decided to find out what they were all looking for. It turned out to be 'shark teeth.' Really? So, we started to comb the beach looking for teeth on the beach at low tide. It was a very tedious process. Over the course of two days we each found a shark tooth. It was very cool and exhilarating.

This is not the point of the article... We didn't know where that estuary led to, but it went under the road outside our resort and kept on going on the other side. The tide went in and out as we watched from our balcony every day. There were people fishing on the beach and looking for shells and shark teeth. We noticed what must have been thousands of small fish swimming up the estuary as the tide came in and leaving as the tide went out. It was a whole ecosystem going on in front of our eyes that we never would have noticed or appreciated if we didn't stop and take the time to explore our environment.

It made me think that there are many things going on all around us, but we may not be paying attention. God is speaking to us all the time, but we get so caught up in our own little world and its cares that we can't hear Him or notice the signs around us. Sometimes I see the waves on the beach; sometimes I see the people walking around; sometimes I see people fishing; sometimes I see the tide is up or down, but it is so difficult to see everything that is happening around me.

God gives us both encouragement and warnings about what we notice in our midst. He warns us to look out for the little foxes that spoil the vines (Song of Solomon 2:15). We might not notice this problem until the damage is done, so He gives us warnings in the Word. He makes reference to His handiwork being evident all around us. This is an encouragement that we can find signs of His creative work and His care for us in every area of our environment if we just take the time to notice and reflect. His handiwork is not only evident in the material things all around us, but consider this... ***For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*** (Eph. 2:10)

So, God not only put all these material reminders in our midst to get our attention on Him, but then once He has our attention, He points our focus back to one another – His handiwork. Of course the center of humanity from His perspective is Jesus Christ, His best for us. Let me bring this to a more seasonal theme. We celebrate Jesus' birth and His coming to rescue us all. We are so busy with our own stuff, that we don't recognize God's voice in our midst many times. Are we too distracted with shopping and gift preparing to see the reason we are celebrating to begin with? O Come Let Us Adore **Him!** Do whatever you have to do to see His hand in your lives and His gift to us in Jesus Christ. There is no better reason to recognize all that God has done for us – materially, spiritually, and emotionally. He still is the reason for the season. Make time to appreciate Him. The Holy Spirit will assist you.

Merry Christmas and Blessings to you all,

Pastor Nick ☺

MISSIONS UPDATE

When I wrote my last missions report for the fall newsletter, I had expected to report on the progress of the church and community in Bellevue, Haiti where we had been helping rebuild. A three-week long effort was to occur in mid-late October. Sadly, this was not the case; due to the increasingly volatile political situation in Haiti, it has been deemed unsafe to travel there and the trip was postponed.

Instead, I'd like to use this space to ask for prayer for the nation of Haiti. The protests have caused a humanitarian crisis in Haiti, as people in rural villages (such as Bellevue) are unable to receive basic items for their survival. Schools, hotels, and businesses have been forced to close, further hurting the economy. People are unable to get the medical care they need.

Please pray for a peaceful resolution to this crisis and a long term solution to Haiti's economic plight. Haiti has never had a stable government in its entire history, and no regime has had any genuine concern for the country's suffering population.

Despite all this, people are still gathering in that church in Bellevue faithfully every Sunday to give thanks to God. He gave them a brand-new place of worship after years of faithful prayer. As bleak as things seem right now in the rest of Haiti, they are no match for the power of God. - Frank Donato



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Patchogue Church of the Nazarene

**2 Nazarene Way
Patchogue, NY**

**Mail:
65 Franklin Street
Patchogue, NY 11772**

Phone & Fax 631-289-3483

Sunday Service at 10am

Pastor: Vincent Linguiti

Check out our website at www.patchnaz.net
for Sermons, Church activities and other events