



Sharing the Love of Christ
First United Presbyterian Church (PCUSA)
PO Box 37
1000 Douglas Avenue
Las Vegas New Mexico 87701



DECEMBER 2019

Pastor's Ponderings

When I was a young child, the doorbell would ring on Christmas Eve and my parents would tell me to hurry and answer it. They would follow close behind me and watch as I opened the door to find Santa Claus standing on the porch, gift in one hand and a candy cane in the other. I remember feeling giddy with excitement and so special because Santa had come to my house with a present just for me - and not in the middle of the night when I couldn't see him, but in the evening when I could see him and talk to him and take the present directly from his hands. Only later, when I got older, did I wonder exactly how this whole Santa thing worked. About the time I reached that stage, the visits stopped.

The truth behind those visits that so tickled me and other kids in town was a dedicated group from the local Rotary who organized it, provided registered families with instructions on leaving presents outside the door, and who engaged lots of volunteers, each of whom undoubtedly agreed to make visits in a particular neighborhood. Those Santa visits were a lot of work for the Rotary members and one more thing for parents to do in an already over-busy season, but I imagine seeing kids like me open the door and break into big, wide-eyed smiles made it worth it.

These memories have been popping into my head a lot recently, and I don't think it's any coincidence that they're doing so—not just because we're approaching Christmas, but because we've been talking about how to put the church near the top of our giving lists. Like the whole effort that resulted in me (and many other children!) receiving a surprise gift from Santa, our efforts to be the church result in gifts for God's children. Just as the Rotary Santa's visits required a lot of organization, coordination, volunteer hours, and funding (acquiring Santa suits, buying candy, purchasing gifts for the children), our ministries have similar requirements.

After all, where would we be if no one stepped up to organize building maintenance or mission projects or communion preparation? What if we weren't willing to coordinate among committees or with community agencies to accomplish our Old Town Mission worship and picnic, the CROP Walk, ecumenical worship services and mission goals, Samaritan House meals and a host of other projects? What if no one showed up to do any of it anyway? What if we all decided to let someone else pick up the cost of our missional giving and local service projects, of our utility bills and custodial services, of our hymnals and musicians? Answer: none of it would happen. We need all of us to give the gifts of food and other needs, hospitality and community, opportunities for spiritual growth, and more.

One of my favorite authors, Annie Dillard, in her book *Holy the Firm*, writes: "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in his holy place? There is no one but us. ... There never has been."

Yes; it's up to us to stand in the holy place and to show that holy place to others. It's up to us to do the organization, the coordination, the volunteering, and the funding it takes to do exactly that, to build God's kingdom as faithfully as we can.

In November, you heard me talk about God's faithfulness and about our responsibilities. Let me say it again: please, give of yourselves and your resources to continue growing this very special place in which we strive to gift God's children with community and love.

With thanks for all of you,
Pastor Katie

GHOST RANCH



Education & Retreat Center

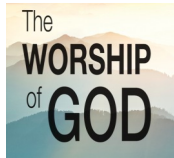
SAVE THE DATE

2020 Church Retreat at Ghost Ranch

September 18-20, 2020

Our 2020 church-wide retreat will be at Ghost Ranch, Sept. 18-20.

More information will be available soon.



WORSHIP TIDBITS FROM PASTOR KATIE

The Christmas season is a time of great extravagance, which it should be because it is a time when we remember God's great extravagance in sending us the gift of Jesus. But we live in a time and place that has so commercialized Christmas that our culture focuses our minds on objects that are extravagant by virtue of their cost, their novelty, and their glitz. We are asked by merchants to give more, give bigger, give better gifts so that their profit margins increase. Your church, too, asks for your gifts at this time. But then, it asks for your gifts all the time.

Each Sunday as you join your church family for worship, you are invited to offer your gifts—to commit your time and abilities and to give your money. It's part of our worship service. In fact, it's required in our Directory for Worship that an opportunity for offering gifts be included in worship. What makes us different from the big box store asking for our money by hawking the newest electronics, the biggest toys, or the most stylish clothes? We don't give to the church to get something in return or to fill corporate coffers. We give to the church so that people will know God's love in the ways we use the gifts. We give to the church to maintain a place to gather for worship, for community, for service, for help. We give to the church so that we have an avenue through which to develop the spiritual discipline of giving and through which to obey Jesus' commandment to love our neighbors.

I occasionally hear people complain that, in addition to the weekly offering, we have a lot of other requests for money. I suppose that's true. We support the denomination's special offerings, which four times a year ask us to support disaster, hunger, and development programs, faith growth for youth, work for peace, leadership development, and church worker needs. We also ask your financial support of fundraisers for several other ministries.

Of course, any and all of these offer an invitation for you to decide whether or not you will, in fact, give of your money (or your time to help). God does call us to give, and to give generously. But we must also discern when we are able to give and when we must decline, without guilt. As Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 9:7-8, "Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work."

So once you have made the commitment to contribute to the regular offering in the way that is right for you, and as you discern how you will support other projects, you will be able to sing with gusto as our gifts are brought forward: Praise God from whom all blessings flow!



ADVENT 2019 – PREPARE THE WAY

This Advent, we will be preparing the way to welcome the birth of Jesus into our hearts and into our way of living. Amid the chaos in which we often live, look for stars in the sanctuary showing us the way to the manger. Gather around the Advent Wreath to remember God's promise to us, to feel God's comfort and forgiveness surrounding us, to feel the joy and to experience the peace God brings. Be reminded that this time of waiting and preparation is given to us so that we might contemplate God's gift of Jesus and that we might consider deeply how we live in response to this gift. So, come! Join us in preparing the way!



The Session members, like our many committee members, are looking forward to seeing the presentation budget prepared by our treasurer, Mary Schipper. This will be available and ready for review at the budget meeting on Monday, Dec. 2, at 7:30 a.m., in Perea Hall. Certainly, committee chairs are encouraged to be there, but anyone who wishes to come is very welcome. We'll see the 2020 proposed budget and hear Mary discuss and answer questions about it. Session members are bringing breakfast munchies, so come and be a part of FUPC financial planning for 2020.

Mustard Seed Committee Chairman Corky Halverson reported that there is now a full committee to work with him on the Mustard Seed Grants, so thanks to all who volunteered. As you will remember from last month's newsletter, the Mustard Seed Grants now have their own committee that will plan fundraising projects to support the grants, as well as read and rank the proposals that come in from the community in March. Many in our congregation say the Mustard Seed Grants are one of the most important outreaches to the community our church does. So many wonderful initiatives begun as Mustard Seed Grants have become community pillars to help people in Las Vegas, not the least of which is the Samaritan House! If you are interested in becoming a part of this new committee, see Corky Halverson.

Karyl Lyne, Clerk of Session






M&P is delighted that the CROP Hunger Walk had 210 participants on a very chilly Oct. 26 morning at UWC, AND that we surpassed our fundraising goal of \$10K. At last count, we had \$10,139.48 with \$600 from the online site, www.crophungerwalk.org/lasvegasnm, and more has come in since then. This means that the Las Vegas Community Soup Kitchen, Comedor de San Pascual Soup Kitchen and the Samaritan House will each receive at least \$845; and we will contribute at least \$7,604 to the work of Church World Service around the world. Thanks to all who contributed.

Looking into December, M&P will once again sponsor PCUSA's Giving Catalog Garden Well Project for \$1,500 to bring a reliable and convenient source of clean water where it has not been before. Certainly, we in Northern New Mexico, can relate to the importance of reliable sources for clean water. Cards will be available for those who would like to dedicate their gift to the well to a friend or family member for Christmas. M&P will also sponsor FUPC's participation in PCUSA's Christmas Joy Offering, which supports church workers facing critical financial need, as well as supporting racial-ethnic education at Menaul School in Albuquerque, Pan Am University in Kingsville, Texas, and Stillman College in Tuscaloosa, Ala.

Finally, the Presbyterian Hunger Program (PHP) and Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) are partnering with agencies in Northern Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen to respond to the UN declaration of famine in these four countries. For famine to be declared, every day more than two people out of 10,000 or four children out of 10,000 die due to lack of food. The hardest hit are women and children. Should you wish to help, visit www.pcusa.org/phpfamine or send your gift to Presbyterian Church USA, P.O. Box 643700, Pittsburgh, Pa. 15264-3700. Thank you.

Karyl Lyne, M&P Chair

Upcoming Events - December

-  **Sunday, December 8 - 2:00 p.m.** - The Linda Vista Community Chorus will perform its winter concert, "Sleigh Bells Ring" at 2 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 8, at the Methodist Church. Cost is \$5 at the door. Several Presbyterians sing in the community chorus. Come support the chorus and hear wonderful music.
-  **Saturday, December 14th - 12:00 Noon** - We will once again have our annual Christmas luncheon at Charlie's on Dec. 14, at 11:30 a.m. It will be Dutch treat. If you would like, please bring a small gift for our White Elephant gift exchange.
-  **Sunday, December 15th - 3:00 p.m.** in the sanctuary the Chancel Choir presents:

Hope! A Gospel Christmas Celebration

Hope! A Gospel Christmas Celebration by Joel Raney will be presented by members of the FUPC Choir and other community singers directed by Amy Hufnal and accompanied by Em Krall, Steve Hufnal and Tommy Maestas on Sunday, December 15, at 3 pm in our sanctuary. *Hope!*, like *Joy!*, presented last year, is a celebration of Christ's birth featuring familiar carols to a slightly unexpected beat and intriguing harmonies. It will be fun for everyone. *Hope!* is the musicians' Christmas offering to the community. We *Hope!* you'll come!

THE NEW “TTT” COMMITTEE



We have a new/old Committee. The Interpretation and Support Committee has changed its name to the Time, Talents, and Treasure Committee. We have the same members and the same agenda, but the name always has seemed confusing to us. We hope our new name more correctly describes what we are and what we do.

Are we the TTT Committee, the 3-T Committee, or even the T³ Committee? We're working on that!

Our committee decided this year, after much consultation with each other, the pastor, and with outside consultants, to plan our 2020 budget without basing it on personal pledges or estimates of giving from church members. Instead, we have asked the other committees to tell us what they want to do and how much it will cost. We think the church budget and the finances of the church will be more efficient and effective.

The various committees are all working to further our church's work. Each committee focuses on some aspect of worshiping God and of carrying out the work of Jesus in today's world. We want a safe and sound building to worship in. We want programs that are of benefit to us, to our neighbors in Las Vegas, and to our brothers and sisters around the world. We want church leadership that can make these plans and carry them out.

The TTT Committee helps to plan and provide for the activities of the other committees. We help them by funding their work, by helping them find workers who have the time and special talents that are needed.

To this end, we make a commitment to you to keep you up to date on the financial position of the church. We plan on regular education and updates in various forms. Tell us if we are on target!

Van Swan, TTT Chair



PROGRESS REPORT FROM B&G

Hey all, what do you think of our new stucco, color and all? Won't it be nice when it is done? We still have a few work days possible this year. Work days for stucco mean days and nights that are above freezing. This stucco is a latex so it does not "cure," it dries. We will keep you posted but keep your eyes on the progress as well!

Other things that have happened at the Douglas Avenue Church, the B & G crew checked out the elevator to be sure it worked. We alerted people that if we were missing, to check the elevator. We all survived. We are also repairing cracks to the sheet rock on the stairs and will paint the walls when we have that completed. The kitchen hood passed its fire suppression test and is good for another six months. Fire Extinguishers will be checked and recharged where necessary in December. The checkup is a yearly occurrence. Recharging is needed every six years from date of manufacture.

On to the OTMCC, the steeple is being worked on and we should have that completed soon. If you are quick, you can check out the scaffolding that was required to do that work – reminiscent of Susan and Gabby days. The B & G crew installed a gutter on the north side of the kitchen addition and plan to get one put on the south side as well. This ties in with the JOT team list for water mitigation. If any of you attended the JOT/SPOT fund raiser dinner you were able to access the "stage" where the food was by going up the stair that we built across the front of the stage.

Hope you had a great Thanksgiving from all of us on the B & G crew: Charlotte, Patrick, Don, Corky, and Robin.



OLD TOWN MISSION COMMUNITY CENTER NEWS



The SPOT Youth Team and the Old Town Mission Community Center will host another Friday Night Fun on Dec. 6 at 6:30 p.m., until whenever we can convince the youth to go home. All adults, youth and children are invited for free pizza and a lot of fun playing ping pong, foosball, basketball, dancing to music, and making new friends from the UWC and all over town. We usually have around 70 folks, so the place is hopping. Tell your friends!

We had a successful International Dinner fundraiser on Nov. 2, with around 70 in attendance. The OTMCC was decorated with flags from all over the world, and the food was what the UWC students missed from home. Delicious! We plan another International Dinner in the spring, so watch for that announcement.

Steeple repairs are almost complete; we are waiting on shingles to arrive to complete the job. We are also planning to blow insulation above the ceiling in the Assembly Room, which should reduce our heating costs.

In October 2019, the building was used by 105 participants at 12 events.

Thank you for your support of this historic building and its mission for youth and community.

D.R. Palmer OTMCC Task Force



MUSTARD SEED COMMITTEE

Mustard seed grants have been a mission of FUPC for about 25 years. These grants (one per project) are awarded in the spring. Recipients of last year's grants are in the process of giving their reports to the congregation. These grants are not given to individuals, but to other nonprofit volunteer groups to enable them to carry out projects. Therefore, our outreach spreads throughout the surrounding area.

We are now gearing up for our fall fundraising. We will be selling tickets in December for the Masonic breakfast on Jan. 4, raffling a doll house, and more. If you know of any worthy nonprofit organizations who might benefit from a mustard seed grant, let them know. We will be accepting applications in February.

Corky Halverson, Chair



2020 CELEBRATION NEWS

Mark your calendars for Dec. 14, 2019 (which is just around the corner) for the Electric Light Parade. We will have a float this year, with our new 2020 logo and tag line: "Seeds. Roots. Branches." Many thanks to Juli Salman for designing our logo.

In keeping with the parade theme of "A Magical Christmas, Film & Television," our float will remember *It's a Wonderful Life* and "whenever a bell rings, an angel gets its wings." (Thanks to Kevin Johnson for this idea!) The float will have a large pair of wings, and banners on the sides

with our logo, church name, and "Celebrating 150 Years in Our Community." Walkers will hand out wildflower seed packets with our logo.

If you would like to help build the float, or assemble seed packets, or walk with the float, please contact Jeff Salman (505-429-0342) or D.R. Palmer (303-775-7259).

There will be a lot of activities next year, including a church website redesign that is well underway. Please mark your calendars for 6/20/2020, because that Saturday is when we have our big celebration with a procession and shindig in Lincoln Park with food and music. If you would like to be help plan or work on of any of the activities, please contact D.R. Palmer.



IMPORTANT QUESTIONS FOR CHRISTIANS: PAT ANSWERS OR THOUGHTFUL DISCUSSION?

Rod Billingsley will lead our Christian Education classes in January and February, discussing some of the most important concepts in Christian belief. Last summer's class members demanded a chance to talk about more topics from their book, so this is their chance and yours.

Starting Jan. 12, the Bible Based Class for Youth and Adults will begin a new seven-week study of the book *Christian Doctrine* (3rd edition) by Shirley C. Guthrie.

Readers have praised this book:

"This is not the dry book that one expects."

"[Guthrie] explores the various positions, offers thought-provoking ideas, and then leaves you to determine your thoughts and position."

"[It is] unusually accessible . . . really compelling justifications."

"Insightful to inspire thought as well as alternative perspective. . . . Can take you out of your comfort zone."

This Sunday morning series will run through Feb. 23 from 9:30 to 10:15 in the East Wing, right after the Jump Start Breakfast (at 8:30) in Perea (fellowship) Hall.

Please contact Richard Lindeborg or the church office if you want us to order a book for you. Books ordered by Dec. 10 will be available by Dec. 20 in the church office.

Rod has chosen the chapter "Who Says So? The Doctrine of Authority" for the first class session. At that session attendees will choose topics for the remaining sessions from the remaining chapters in the book:

General Revelation: How Can We Find God?

Special Revelation: How Does God Find Us?

Attributes of God: What Is God Like?

Creation: What Are We Doing Here?

Human Beings: Who Are We?

Sin: Why Don't you Just Be Yourself?

Resurrection: Who's in Charge Here?

The Holy Spirit: What's New?

The Church: Living or Dead?

Christian Hope for the Future: What's Going to Happen to Us?

The Lenten class series will begin March 1.

Richard Lindeborg, Christian Education Committee



Christians often read the words of Old Testament prophets as foretelling Jesus' life. This is especially true in the words of Isaiah 9:6: For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

I bet you're hearing Handel's *Messiah* in your head as you read those words, aren't you? "For unto us a Son is given...and his name shall be called...WONDERFUL! COUNSELOR! ALMIGHTY GOD, THE EVER-LASTING FATHER, THE PRINCE OF PEACE!"

"The Messiah," our Advent study, will take a close look at the titles in Isaiah 9:6 that we've attributed to Jesus. The study, written by Walter Brueggemann, one of the foremost Hebrew Bible scholars of the last several decades, asks, "What were these expectations [of a Messiah] and *did* Jesus fulfill them?" Brueggemann writes:

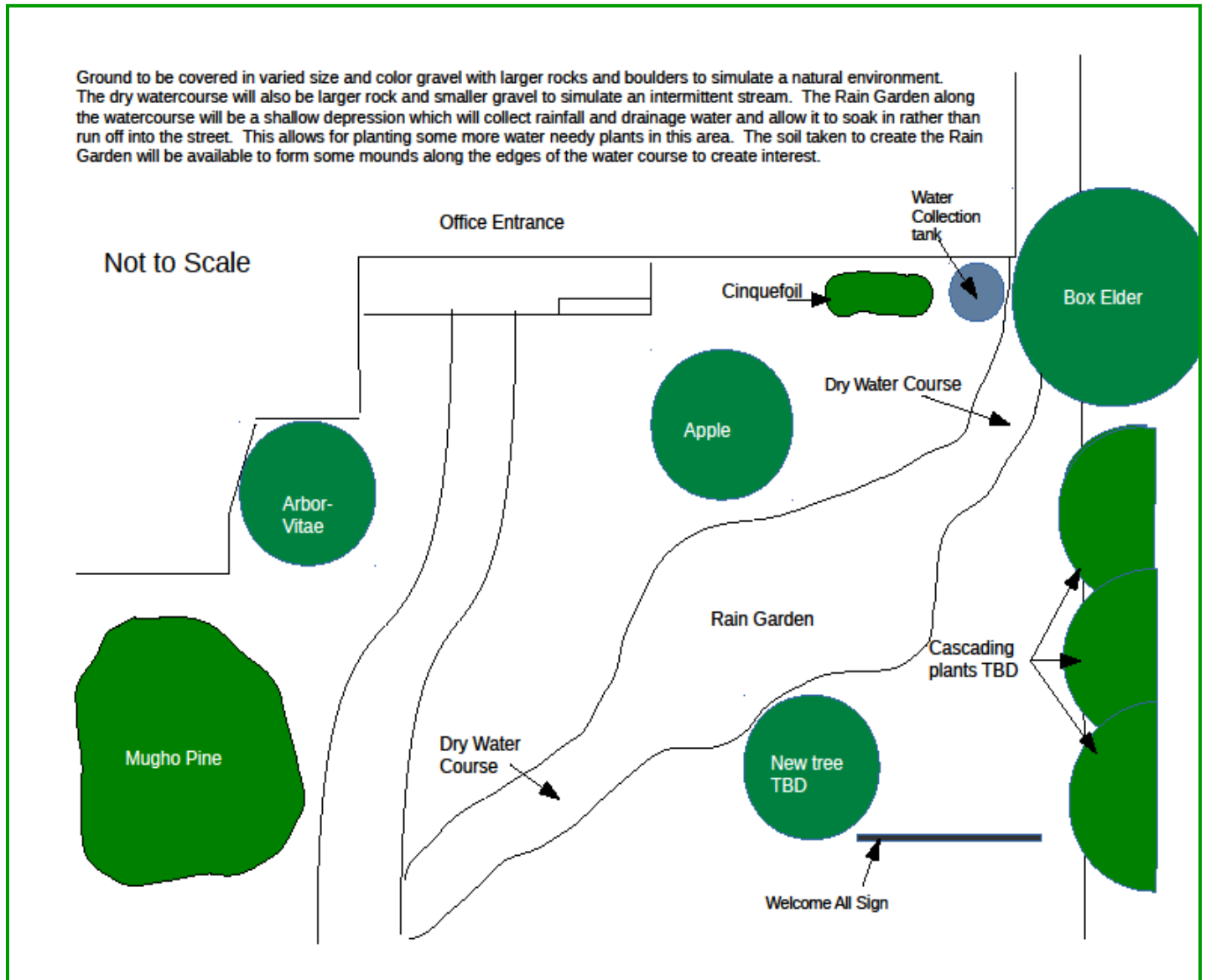
As we ponder the use of those titles . . . two things become clear. First, in the witness to Jesus by the early Christians in the New Testament, they relied heavily on Old Testament "anticipations" of the coming Messiah. But second, Jesus did not fit those "anticipations" very well such that a good deal of interpretive imagination was required to negotiate the connection between the anticipation and the actual bodily, historical reality of Jesus.

Join us as we imagine how Jesus embodied those familiar titles: Wonderful Counselor! Almighty God! Everlasting Father! Prince of Peace!

Copies of each week's study, from *The Thoughtful Christian*, will be available the week prior in class, in the church office, or electronically from Pastor Katie (pastorkatiepalmer@gmail.com). You are encouraged to contribute \$5 to cover the cost of the study and costs of copying each week's lesson.

LANDSCAPING TASK FORCE

The Landscaping Task Force made a bit more progress, taking out the pyracantha and lilacs, and dirt on the east side of yard. Also, many elm branches were trimmed in the back. Thanks to all who helped. See the attached plan for the front yard. We will be proceeding as weather permits.



First United Presbyterian Church

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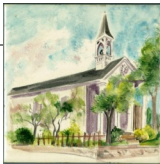
Sunday Schedule

8:30 a.m. - Jumpstart Breakfast:

9:30 a.m. - Bible Based Study

10:30 a.m. - Sunday Worship

Fellowship Hour following the worship service



DECEMBER 2019



Christmas Eve Service
Tuesday, December 24
5:00 p.m.



Communion is offered each Sunday from October 6 through Pentecost (May 31, 2020) and on the first and third Sundays of each month from June through September. We do not celebrate Communion on the fifth Sunday of a month due to the addition of the Healing Liturgy to the service.



3 rd	Peter Linder
4 th	Diego Trujillo
	Denice Spicer
5 th	Gay Veit
8 th	Renee Buchanan
10 th	Connie Trujillo
14 th	Gail Malley
20 th	Betty Kretz
21 st	Stella Pino
23 rd	Juli Salman
24 th	Richard Lindeborg
26 th	Corky Halverson
27 th	Wamoth Spicer

Deep and Wide

*A Contemplative Service at the
Old Town Mission*



5:15 p.m. – 6:15 p.m.
Second and Fourth Tuesdays
at the Old Town Mission Church

This is an ecumenical gathering open to all,
sponsored by FUPC.



Samaritan House Food Donations

For December

Canned Meats (Tuna, chicken, stew)

Coffee and Tea are always appreciated