



THE ALABASTER JAR

The Monthly Newsletter of Bethany Presbyterian Church

A WELCOMING CHRIST-CENTERED BIBLE-BASED CONGREGATION
PROCLAIMING THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS CHRIST THROUGH
GRACE, TRUTH & LOVE

Sunday School

9:45 AM

Sunday Worship

11:00 AM

Monday Bible Study

6:30 PM

Thursday (Every Other)

Women's Fellowship

7:00 PM

Listen to us on:

WSNJ 1240 AM-

Sunday at 9:30 AM

LIFT 98.5 FM-

Sunday at 1:00 PM

Or online at

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Spread the word!



Bethany

Presbyterian Church

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December, 2009

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

In the Gospel of Luke (1:26-38), the birth of Jesus is foretold to Mary by the angel Gabriel. He declares to Mary that she is "highly favored" and that "The Lord is with you" (v. 28). In the Christmas story, as all throughout the scriptures, God chooses someone that would have been passed over by the world to not only be blessed, but to be a blessing to others. Why did God choose to use Mary when there were countless others who could have been His vessel to deliver redemption into the world?

Mary's song in Luke 1:46-55 gives some clues as to why God chose Mary. In v. 46, Mary states that she is glorying in the Lord and rejoicing in Him. God chooses to use those who will glorify Him and not glory in their own talents, strengths, or accomplishments (Matthew 5:16, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Revelation 15:4). Mary goes on to state that God "has been mindful of the humble state of his servant" (v. 48). 1 Corinthians 1:27-31 tells us that God chooses the things that the world would dismiss so that His power might shine and that "no one may boast before him" (v. 29). When we humble ourselves before the Lord, He will lift us up (James 4:10) to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us (2 Corinthians 4:7). God does not look for natural talent or education; He is looking for a heart that is inclined toward Him (1 Samuel 16:7). When we recognize how weak we are in ourselves, it is then that we can be strong in Christ (2 Corinthians 12:10) and He can then do "immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us" (Ephesians 3:20).

Christmas is a season of miracles and hope. It is not about the carols, lights, gifts, and decorations. The message of Christmas is that our salvation has come! He has come to the entire world (John 3:16), but it is up to us if we will accept this gift. Mary accepted the gift, even though she might not have had the right resume, but she had the right heart. We are by our own nature unworthy of this gift—that is why we receive it through grace (Ephesians 2:8). Once we receive this gift we are then made the righteousness of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21).

To prepare yourself to receive this amazing gift, ask yourself: 1) What do I glory in (family, position, friends)?; 2) Where is my hope (accomplishments, strengths)?; 3) What is holding me back from receiving God's best (guilt, the past)? God wants you to glory in Him alone (Psalm 37:4) and to set our hope "fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed" (1 Peter 1:13). Finally, don't let the regrets of yesterday become the worries of today or the excuses of tomorrow. In Christ, all things are made new (2 Corinthians 5:17) and His mercies are new every morning (Lamentations 3:22-23).

This Christmas receive the miracle of new life that has been given to you to have and enjoy (John 10:10). God is not looking for the qualified to receive His call; rather, He qualifies the called. This Christmas—the message of the angel Gabriel is a message to you: **you** are highly favored and the Lord is with **you**. **God loves you!**

In Christ,

Robin B. Weinstein, Pastor



*Celebrate the Miracle of Christmas with
Bethany Presbyterian Church*

Advent Sermon Series: *O, Holy Night!*

December 13 at 11:00 AM- "King of Kings"

December 18 at 7:00 PM- Skyline Boys Christmas Concert

Christmas Sunday, December 20- "Jesus: Our Liberator"

Service begins at 10:30 AM with Christmas Carols Hymn Sing

11:00 AM- Children's Christmas Pageant

3:00- 7:00 PM- Pastor's Open House

Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion Service, December 24, 7- 8:15 PM

with Special Musical Guests



Beginning on January 10, 2009 a new sermon series:

"GOD DOES NOT SERVE VANILLA PUDDING:

Discovering and Celebrating Your Identity in Christ"

1. Discovering Your Uniqueness
2. Dancing with David: Celebrating Who You Are
3. Learning to Forgive Yourself

And MUCH MORE...

Please see Lynette Newkirk or
Dianne Johnson for an application. Also
available on www.bethanyinbridgeton.com
Applications are due by January 10.

STEPHEN MINISTRY



**Young Adult Fellowship began in December
and will continue to meet monthly on the
2nd Friday of every month
7:00 PM- 10:00 PM.**

Ages 18-39

Plan to attend!