

# Koinonia's Extra News

Friday, December 25, 2009

## Church Activities

---

Please add our [Christmas Eve service](#) to your calendar. It will feature carols, drama, communion and candle lighting. In the drama, "The Greatest Joy," Mary, a shepherd and other characters tell their story to Luke, who is doing research for a book about Jesus. We hope to see you all at 7:30 p.m. for this celebration of the birth of our Savior.

Thanks to everyone who helped with our [Ten Thousand Villages](#) sale. All of the remaining items from the warehouse have been sent back. Our total sales were down this year, but we still sold an impressive \$6,869.50 in merchandise. Our bake sale netted \$246.68 for Bishop Opondo's ongoing project in Kenya. More than two dozen people were involved in making the sale a success. That includes those who baked, worked the floors to answer questions, staffed the checkout, helped to set up and to take down the displays, and those who entertained. There are so many little things that magically got done, and we are grateful to each and every one of you who did all of the work. We're already thinking about next year, hoping the economy will be better, and thinking of ways to get the word out as the whole area of mass communications is changing (no local newspaper delivery, increase in online outlets, etc.). We welcome your ideas.

Last Sunday, the J.O.Y. Club Ministries hosted our [Christmas caroling](#). We sang at Archstone Care Center on Pecos and then went to Shady Pines Care Center on Vaughn in Gilbert. Following our singing at Shady Pines, we went to Heidi Fischer's home for refreshments and even more singing to go with the finger foods and chili dip. One outcome of this venture was a decision to add a singing event at a care center to our regular list of activities, not only at Christmas, but at other times of the year. This is a direct result of the enthusiastic reception that we got in return for our singing. The ability to make people smile in the midst of their troubles is truly a gift of God, and one we want to share.

We want to thank those of you who responded to our call to sign the [letter to the Mayor of Bethlehem](#), the Bethlehem City Council, and their citizens. The letter went out early this week, so that they will know of our support as they enter into their events to commemorate the birth of our Savior. At this time when our thoughts are on that Holy City, it is appropriate to be hoping and praying for peace between the peoples of

the region. We should be remembering the importance of keeping all of the holy sites in the region open to all who want to visit there on pilgrimage.

There are several ways that we here at Koinonia have been participating in various projects to help those in need. Here is a listing of what we have been able to do: As usual, the bake sale during Ten Thousand Villages raised money to support [Bishop Opondo's training center in Kenya](#). We set up our annual [Sock Tree for the Homeless](#). And, for those of you who like to purchase livestock through the [Heifer Project to help](#) people in many lands who make their living by raising animals, Heifer's current catalog was also available so that you could make your selection and be able to help in that way. In addition to the opportunities listed above, we have a few copies of a new booklet, "Joy to the World," which is full of [MCC ideas for Christmas giving for 2009](#). They only provided five booklets, so we suggest sharing, or you can go online at <http://mcc.org/Christmas>. The booklets are on the table in the lobby. Many of the things can be done year-long.

## News from members and mission partners

---

A message from [James and Michelle Stabler-Havener](#) tells us that they are finding it somewhat difficult to think of Christmas while in [China](#), as it is treated there in a purely commercial manner. They want to thank us for our prayers and support. We have also heard from [Robert and Patty Nosker](#), who tell us that the checking of their translations for the five books of the Bible they have managed to complete recently will begin on January 7<sup>th</sup>. They are hopeful that the Pemon version they have helped to create will be found to be accurate. They also ask for our prayers for safety and wisdom in the midst of a rather chaotic situation in [Venezuela](#).

It was good to hear from Daniel Pincu on Thanksgiving Sunday in regard to the mission his parents began in Romania and that he and his wife have begun to take on as their own. His message was inspiring, and we were privileged to hear him play the flute as well. If you haven't already seen them, take the time to look at the display of photos from Romania which he sent from the mission field. We have now heard from him that his wife, Ramona, has passed her dental exam and will be able to practice dentistry there soon. He also writes that one of the churches just had a baptism ceremony and that it is uplifting to know that God is surely at work there.

## Events with Neighboring Churches

---

**Men of Koinonia:** Men's retreat is just around the corner, January 22-24 at Living Water Retreat Center in Cornville. Our speaker this year is Marion Bontrager, Biblical Literature Professor from Hesston College. Heilsgeschichte may be hard to say, but it means Salvation History. Please make plans to attend this year for a time of spiritual renewal and recreation. For more information please speak to George H.

## Other Events and Information

---

On Sunday, January 3<sup>rd</sup>, this church will be celebrating **Epiphany Sunday**. Some of our members and friends know what this is all about, while others may not, and still others may need a reminder. If you look up Epiphany, you will learn that it is generally recognized as being on January 6<sup>th</sup>, although it is often celebrated on the Sunday which falls the closest to that date. You may also learn that it is a day commemorating the visit of the Magi to the Baby Jesus in Bethlehem. You will also learn that it is variously known as Twelfth Day and as Three Kings Day. The word "epiphany" has come to mean something mysterious that is revealed. Its Greek roots tell us it is related to words for "appearance" and "manifestation," and (more mysteriously) to "apparition". If this is confusing to you, perhaps it will help if you know that the word "Magi" is related to the word "magic," and it refers to the "Wise Men," who many thought of as magicians. They were Persian priests, it is widely believed, and it is possible that one of the things which conferred a special status on them was the performance of miracles. No matter what you believe, Epiphany is widely celebrated as the first manifestation of the belief in Jesus Christ to the non-Jews. You see, everyone who was not a Jew was classed as a Gentile, and the belief of the Magi in the divinity of the Baby Jesus is the first known Gentile worship of Christ. Pastor Rich will be starting a new series that Sunday, using the theme "The Word Among Us".

Another holiday that many of us know very little about is **Kwanzaa**. It is actually the newest holiday celebration, and it is classified as a cultural holiday, not a religious one. Created in 1966 by Dr. Maulana Karenga, Professor of Africana Studies at California State University—Long Beach, it was a response to what began in the Black Liberation Movement of the 1960s. Kwanzaa was created "to reaffirm and restore our rootedness in African culture". Although not celebrated by all African-Americans, it is gaining in popularity year by year. The dates of Kwanzaa are December

26<sup>th</sup> through January 1<sup>st</sup>. The holiday takes its name from the phrase “*matunda ya kwanza*,” which means “first fruits” in Swahili. It is a time of ingathering of the people, special reverence for the creator and creation, commemoration of the past, recommitment to the highest cultural ideals, and a celebration of the Good of life and of existence itself. As such, it is celebrated by people of all faiths. To celebrate, many families set up a display featuring items that represent the Seven Principles: *Umoja* (Unity), *Kujichagulia* (Self-Determination), *Ujima* (Collective Work and Responsibility), *Ujamaa* (Cooperative Economics), *Nia* (Purpose), *Kuumba* (Creativity), and *Imani* (Faith). In this way, many African-Americans have taken pride in who they are, something which is felt to be extremely important given the many years of slavery, segregation, and other forms of degradation that are part of the sad history of this country.

**"Extra News"** -- Information that doesn't fit our Sunday bulletin or needs wider publicity than our Sunday morning gathering. Sent every Friday to members and friends of Koinonia . For a paper copy contact Barb T. via [office@koinoniamennonitechurch.com](mailto:office@koinoniamennonitechurch.com). To learn more about Koinonia, visit our web site, [www.KoinoniaMennoniteChurch.com](http://www.KoinoniaMennoniteChurch.com).

Koinonia Mennonite Church - 2505 N. Dobson Rd - Chandler AZ 85224 -  
Tel. (480) 963 2416  
SEEKING the will of God, FOLLOWING the teachings of Jesus,  
BUILDING his Kingdom