

# Koinonia's Extra News

November 2009 Summary

## Church Activities

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**Thanks for watching** “Hurricane on the Bayou” last Saturday. Next June, we are hoping to have a mission trip for some hands-on work in Louisiana with our partner congregation through Churches Supporting Churches, the New Orleans Bible Fellowship Baptist Church. The film showing raised just over \$300. If you sold tickets and haven’t turned in the money yet, please turn it in to Barb T. or to Hazel. You should have received a form asking you to commit to supporting these efforts in your mailbox at church. There are new forms with blanks for you to list your name and contact information. Several folks have already made the commitment, and others have orally expressed an interest in coming along to the Gulf with us. We’re already thinking about other fund-raising events we can do. So far, about a dozen folks have indicated an interest. We’re hoping several of the youth will be interested. Other churches that have done mission trips to help restore New Orleans have found there young people to be excellent workers, as well as to find the experience quite moving.

The **J.O.Y. Club Ministries (note the new name)** had a day of fun last Saturday at the **Desert Botanical Gardens** in Phoenix. In addition to the Chili and Chocolate day, which some of the group really enjoyed, there were also musicians playing Andalusian Spanish music (flamenco guitar, etc.) and a flamenco dance exhibition. A good time was had by all, and some of the participants will be happy to show you pictures, if you are interested.

A **fellowship meal** is planned for this Sunday, November 29, which is the first Sunday of Advent. The day has been designated Leftover Sunday, so bring your leftovers from Thanksgiving or create something new with them. If you went somewhere but still wanted to make a side dish, do that and bring it to share. Please also bring your own tableware, so that we can continue our attempts at being good to the environment.

This year, the J.O.Y. Club Ministries will be hosting our **Christmas caroling**. The date scheduled is Sunday, December 13<sup>th</sup>. We hope to carol at two or three places and then go to a member’s home afterwards for some snacks. More info will be available soon, but for now you can put the date on your calendar.

The Holidays are a time when needs within the community and the world seem much more acute. We want to be able to help. There are several ways that we here at Koinonia will be participating in various projects to help those in need. Here is a listing of what is available for those who want to help: As usual, the bake sale during Ten Thousand Villages will raise money to support [Bishop Opondo's training center in Kenya](#). Following the Ten Thousand Villages sale, we will be setting up our annual [Sock Tree for the Homeless](#), so start buying those socks now. They tell us that gloves can also be contributed, but that socks are needed more. 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 is also available so that you can make your selection and be able to help in that way. As we hear of more opportunities for special holiday projects, we will let you know.

We were also collecting non-perishable canned/boxed food donations for [St. Vincent de Paul](#) at the request of Road Machinery, where a number of our members have worked over the years. That drive has now ended, and we thank those of you who contributed. Your generosity filled three large boxes with canned and boxed items for Chandler Christian Community Center as well. The total was 301 pounds. We were also asking for financial assistance to pay [school tuition for Bishop Opondo's daughter](#). Thanks to those of you who responded to this call, we have met our goal!

## **News from members and mission partners**

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It was good to hear from Daniel Pincu this past 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.

## **Events in Neighboring Churches**

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## **Other Events and Information**

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A note from our friends running [APECA/Natalie's House](#). They just informed us that they received grant funding for their Merry-Go-Around effort, a mobile thrift store that will help provide sustainable income for

the construction/program at Natalie's house. If you're not familiar with APECA, you can check out their website at <http://www.protectchild.org>.

November is officially **Native American Heritage Month**. We need to be mindful of what Native Americans have suffered as a result of the arrival of Europeans in the Americas: Land thefts, boarding school oppression, and anti-native religion laws, all of which has served to deny native peoples their cultural heritage.

What are you doing to live more simply and sustainably? Whatever you are doing to make the world a better and more sustainable place to live, the authors of a new Mennonite Publishing Network book, **Simply Sustainable**, want to know. The book is scheduled for release in the Fall of 2010. To offer a submission or to learn more about the book please visit [www.simply-sustainable.org](http://www.simply-sustainable.org).

Most of us know that our Jewish friends and neighbors celebrate **Hanukkah** at this time of year, but very few know much about it. So we will try to clear that up a little, as we believe it's important for us to understand what is significant to our neighbors. Hanukkah (also spelled Chanukah) is an eight-day Festival of Light that begins on the eve of Kislev 25 on the Jewish calendar. This year, that will be December 11<sup>th</sup>. It is said that the date celebrates the triumph of light over darkness, purity over adulteration, and spirituality over materiality. Historically, it is a commemoration of the Maccabean Revolt of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE. The story is that the Temple in Jerusalem was desecrated by the forces of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who had ascended to the Seleucid throne by 175 BCE, massacring many Jews while also looting. Judaism had been effectively outlawed. This provoked a large-scale revolt and one family, led by Mattathias, a Jewish priest, led the rebellion. He had five sons and, together, they overcame their oppressors. One son, Judah, became the effective leader, and became known as Yehuda HaMakabi (Judah the Hammer). The revolt took ten years, and when they entered the looted Temple, they set out to cleanse it, build a new altar, and light the Menorah, or oil lamp. They found only enough olive oil to burn for a single night, but they had great faith, lit it, and sent for more oil. The miracle happened then. The lamp burned for eight days, enough time to get new, consecrated oil.

A series of rituals are celebrated throughout the holiday. The traditional menorah has places for nine candles, one for each of the eight days, plus a *shamash*, or guard from which the other candles will be lit. The first night, one is lit, the second, two, and so on. The lights can be candles or oil lamps, and they should burn for at least one half hour after it gets dark. There are traditional songs, foods, and games as well. You may have seen *dreidels*, a kind of top with Hebrew lettering on each side. The

letters are *Nun, Gimel, Hey, and Shin*. They are an acronym for the Hebrew words “*Nes Gadol Haya Sham*,” which means “A great miracle happened here.” In addition to playing with the *dreidel*, Jewish children enjoy fried foods (a custom related to the olive oil), including latkes (the Yiddish word for potato pancakes), and *pontshkes* (jam-filled doughnuts). Many families hand out *gelt*, in the form of chocolates covered with gold foil to resemble coins, to their children. In America, children expect to get a gift each night of Hanukkah, but that is not the practice in Israel. It is believed that the “tradition” of gifts began here in order to prevent the Jewish children from wanting to convert to Christianity, since they saw their Christian friends getting gifts for Christmas.

Now that you know what our Jewish neighbors are celebrating at this time of year, here is a little information about our Muslim neighbors. Today, November 27<sup>th</sup>, one day after Muslim pilgrims have conducted the *Haj* (pilgrimage to Mecca), a three-day celebration known as ‘*Eid al Adha*, or the Holiday (Feast) of Sacrifice, takes place. This holiday commemorates the willingness of Ibrahim (Abraham to us) to sacrifice his son, who the Muslims know as Ismael (or Ishmael), as an act of obedience to God (whose name in Arabic is *Allah*). It is considered a very holy celebration, as it reminds Muslims that the name of their religion, *Islam*, means submission to God and His will.

For those of you who are fans of **Ken Medema**, we have learned that he has a new Christmas album out, called *Watching the Sky*. It is mostly instrumental and incorporates traditional Christmas carols in Ken’s unique style. Ken has other Christmas music available, as well as music for other occasions and seasons. Check it out at [www.KenMedema.com](http://www.KenMedema.com).

**"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).

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SEEKING the will of God, FOLLOWING the teachings of Jesus,  
BUILDING his Kingdom