

The Taftsville Chapel Current

God calls us as followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as a community of grace, joy and peace, so that God's healing and hope flow through us to our world.

"The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." John 3:8

"For in Him, all the fullness of The Deity lives in bodily form..." Colossians 2:9

There are so many things to ponder and wonder about during Advent. The Christmas story has captivated and inspired for millennia, and each new generation is drawn in to the stable, the manger, the baby, the animals, the angels, the shepherds and the kings. Eventually, we must be still enough to consider the Incarnation: God with us. Incredible.

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*Photos in this issue taken by V. Schlabach*

Our intellect does not make friends easily with mystery; in fact, our brains often get in the way. "Knowledge is power," we say, and we're right if chosen ignorance is the only other option. But "knowledge" has limitations as a path to worship. Trying to understand with reason and logic, what is meant to instill wonder and awe, can only diminish the very best parts of us.

Consider this: "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together." (Colossians 1:15-17) Where do you go first with that? How do you process all that is being said there? How do you put that together with a baby in a stable? How quickly in the process do you reach the end of your useable brainpower and where do you go next?

Obviously, the reality of the Incarnation (God with us in all His fullness, in the fully human Jesus of Nazareth) is only approached by faith and remains fully in the realm of wonder. Our awareness of His greatness (and our smallness) moves us to either turn away in fear and shame or toward Him in worship and joy.

The Christmas story illustrates this. Herod had one response and the shepherds had another. To rejoice along with the shepherds with abandon is to appear foolish, maybe even ignorant, and certainly unsophisticated: Kind of like little children.

We do noble battle every year with the noise and hype, the crass commercialism and the frenzied busyness of the season. A peaceful and quiet and unhurried atmosphere is a great environment to welcome the Newborn, and well worth intentional pursuit. But welcoming the Incarnation in all its biblical potency is altogether another matter, and may lead us into a very personal and private kind of battle, in to realms where humility, dependence and vulnerability are often viewed as enemies of our joy rather than allies.

So, come to Bethlehem and see. If we let the magnitude of what we are celebrating sink in deep enough, we won't need our eyes to believe what we see.

***"Rejoice, rejoice, Immanuel has come to thee O Israel!"***

*-Randy Good*

### Friendly animals help children think about Advent and Christmas

Beginning November 30, the first Sunday of Advent, the children's Sunday school time will follow this year's Advent animal theme. Janet North has already begun to teach the children the lovely old English carol, "The Friendly Beasts", and during worship on the four Sundays of December, Elinor Shattuck will tell puppet stories using animals from the Christmas story. All the children through grade 5 and their teachers will work together to create individual crèches, beginning with stables on November 30 and then making several animals each week. The patterns feature the animals in "The Friendly Beasts" as well as baby Jesus in the manger. The smallest children can color their animals; the older children can do all the steps involved. The children will sing the song during worship on the Sunday morning before Christmas, and Elinor will follow up with one more animal story on December 28.

- Virginia Schlabach

### Special Christmas Caring Project

Please bring new caps, mittens, scarves, and socks to hang on the Christmas tree in the Millen Room.

These items will be given to PATH - Department of Prevention, Assistance, Transition, and Health Access - to share with needy area families.

### The Friendly Beasts

Jesus our Brother, kind and good  
Was humbly born in a stable rude,  
And friendly beasts around him stood.  
Jesus our Brother, kind and good.

"I" said the donkey, shaggy and brown,  
"I carried his mother uphill and down;  
I carried his mother to Bethlehem town."  
"I" said the donkey, shaggy and brown.

"I" said the cow, all white and red,  
"I gave him my manger for his bed.  
I gave him hay to pillow his head."  
"I" said the cow, all white and red.

"I" said the sheep, with curly horn,  
"I gave him my wool for his blanket warm;  
He wore my coat on Christmas morn."  
"I" said the sheep, with curly horn.

"I" said the dove, from rafters high,  
"I cooed him to sleep that he should not cry;  
We cooed him to sleep, my mate and I."  
"I" said the dove, from rafters high.

Thus every beast by some good spell  
In the stable dark was glad to tell  
Of the gift he gave Emmanuel,  
The gift he gave Emmanuel.

- traditional English carol

☆ Christmas Caroling in the village of Taftsville,  
Sunday, December 21 at 6:30

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## Children and Youth

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**This fall the youth group has taken on a life of its own.** The youth asked if we could meet more than just on Sunday mornings. After thinking about all the potential hazards, I agreed to let the youth come to my apartment every Sunday evening to hang out. We have spent time playing Taboo, Rook, Settlers, lots of different card games, soccer, and Frisbee. One evening we carved pumpkins. After we have burned off some energy, we spend time talking about what God is doing in our lives and have starting learning a little about Anabaptist History. The other focus of youth group this year is that we are raising money to go to the Mennonite Youth Convention in Columbus, Ohio in the summer. With expenses for possibly 11 people (8 youth, 3 adults) we have a lot of fundraising ahead of us. This fall we have sold refreshments at the Bethany Birches Auction, and had a Foliage Bake Sale out in front of the Taftsville Store. We made a Chili meal for the congregation one Sunday after church, with a total income of \$408. All of these fundraisers have been successful and we are thankful for all of the support of the congregation.

*- Allison Fletcher, Youth Leader*



**Sunday school boys write PEACE in several languages among pictures they chose for a mural depicting the vision of peace in Isaiah 11.**

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## Announcements

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**Baby Christopher on his debut at church, November 23**

**Christopher John McCrory** was born at 7:29 AM, Monday, November 3, 2008, weighing 9 lbs 2 oz. to Mike and Judy McCrory, and proud siblings, Calvin, Mabel and Evelyn.

**Susanne Walker and George Abetti** will be married in Paris on December 30<sup>th</sup>, where she has resided for the last 15 years. The newly-weds will return together to Vermont mid-January and live in George's home on Hurricane Hill.

**Tim Good and Allison Fletcher** announced their engagement to be married. More information will be coming in the January issue of The Taftsville Chapel Current.

## Schedule for December

**Each Sunday morning:** 9:30 am – Worship Service  
 10:45 am – Coffee and Fellowship  
 11:00 am – Sunday School

## December

## Taftsville Tally

|                                                                             | Attendance                             | Offering   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|------------|
| November 2                                                                  | 45                                     | \$1,810.25 |
| 9                                                                           | 56                                     | 1,729.00   |
| 16                                                                          | 58                                     | 1,595.00   |
| 23                                                                          | ?                                      | 1,645.00   |
| <i>*Thanksgiving offering \$1506.00</i>                                     |                                        |            |
| 30                                                                          | <i>See January "Current" for Tally</i> |            |
| <i>Please note that these totals do not always reflect the final tally.</i> |                                        |            |

### December Birthdays

|                   |                   |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| 2 Judy McCrory    | 17 Vera Fogg      |
| 4 Janet North     | 18 Hunter Cox     |
| 6 Randy Good      | 22 Joanna Pejouhy |
| 8 Micah Schlabach | 24 Jane Glick     |
| 11 Laura Beidler  | 29 Jan Collins    |

### December Anniversary

|                          |
|--------------------------|
| 21 Toby & Bekah Deitrich |
| 21 Kevin and Karen Cox   |

### December Childcare

|                          |
|--------------------------|
| 7 Karen Cox              |
| 14 Hannah Cox            |
| 21 Dave or Caren Swanson |
| 28 Jane Glick            |

### December Cleaning

|             |
|-------------|
| 7 Snader    |
| 14 Shattuck |
| 21 Wolfe    |
| 28 Wolfe    |

### December Song Leaders

|                       |
|-----------------------|
| 7 Carmeleta Beidler   |
| 14 Janice Zook        |
| 21 Virginia Schlabach |
| 28 Zook               |



Thanksgiving communion table

**\*Our special Thanksgiving offering** was designated for SEVCA, an organization that helps households in the Upper Valley with their fuel expenses. The total received was \$1,506.

**The Sunday school children** also collected a carton of food items, which were delivered to The Haven in time for Thanksgiving.



*Recently Church Council responded to a request from Franconia Conference for help with support for Krista Ehst, a six-month mission intern in London, England. Krista is a member of Perkasio Mennonite Church in Pennsylvania, my former church. She graduated last spring from Goshen College with a degree in Bible and religion and a minor in music. Krista arrived in London on October 30, so she is still adjusting to the city and culture, meeting new people, and exploring what her roles will be. She is based in Stepney in London's East End, which she describes as "a very vibrant area, with lots of diversity. There are quite a few markets around, with heavy Bangladeshi influence..."*

*As for adjustments, she writes: "I'm trying to get used to drinking so much tea! Every time I come in, I'm offered a 'cuppa tea' and just can't believe that so many people drink so much tea on a regular basis! It's nice, though." To help our congregation understand why she is in London and what she is doing, Krista has written the following especially for the Current. For reflective writing and updates, check her blog at [www.xanga.com/KristaEhst](http://www.xanga.com/KristaEhst)*

*- Virginia Schlabach*

**Why England?** It all began when Gay Brunt Miller from Franconia Mennonite Conference took a class with Stuart Murray Williams, director of the Anabaptist Network. She was intrigued by his discussions about living in a 'post-christendom' context in the United Kingdom (U.K.) and creating church models that could reach out to and engage with a society where Christianity was no longer necessarily the norm. Eventually Gay's curiosity led to a group from FMC coming over here to the U.K. to visit Stuart and others who are associated with the Anabaptist Network.

Franconia Conference would like to form a partnership with the Anabaptist Network because Gay and others believe that we as North Americans have much to learn from our Christian and Anabaptist brothers and sisters here in the U.K. We may be headed towards a similar state of 'post-christendom,' and it certainly seems like we need fresh and creative models of doing and being church. The Anabaptist Network is also a good group for us North American Mennonites to connect with because they are engaging with, studying, and embracing Anabaptism in a setting that totally lacks (or is free from) the sort of generational faith of Mennonite communities that we have in the States. People here are choosing the Anabaptist story and values because they find those things inspiring and transformative in their current lives.

**So what am I here to do in London?** Mostly, I am here to learn and build relationships and pave the way for future internships and relationships that can strengthen the partnership between the Anabaptist Network and Franconia Mennonite Conference. That learning and relating will happen in a variety of ways:

- traveling throughout England, visiting various Anabaptist study groups and listening to the stories of people who have chosen to embrace Anabaptism in their own particular contexts. This will be for my own learning, as well as for a book that Stuart Murray Williams is currently working on.
- working with Urban Expressions, an associate of the Anabaptist Network. This is an inner-city church planting organization that seeks to plant churches in contextual, relational, and creative ways. I'll be doing some administrative work for them, helping to update their website and other tasks, while of course meeting more people along the way.
- working specifically alongside a former Urban Expressions church plant, now a ten-year-old church in East London called E1 community church. This church is closely tied to the Geoff Ashcroft Community, which offers support for those in the community with mental health issues.

I am in London to learn from and work alongside the Anabaptist Network and Urban Expressions, two groups that are trying to find relevant and meaningful ways of doing church in a society that knows and cares increasingly less about the Christian church. I will also be exploring and learning about what it means to be Anabaptist in this context, and learning from those who take the

Anabaptist values of discipleship, community building, and peace making very seriously. The hope is that I will return to Franconia with many stories and experiences to share, and perhaps even some ideas of what we, in the Franconia Mennonite Conference, can learn from Anabaptism as expressed in the U.K. context.

- Krista Ehst

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## Taftsville Tidbit Trivia

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### *Do you remember when...*

#### **40 YEARS AGO THIS MONTH**

*December 22, 1968*

The 1-W unit has invited the congregation to help sing Christmas carols. Meet at the church at 8:00 pm. Caroling will be carried out by walking from door to door of suggested places. *(Is this a record of the very first caroling event?) -Carie Good*

#### **35 YEARS AGO THIS MONTH**

*December 6, 1973*

In light of the Energy Crisis, we should discontinue heating the church for Wednesday evening Bible study. The thermostat will be set at 65 for worship services.

#### **30 YEARS AGO THIS MONTH**

*December 20, 1978*

7 p.m. Christmas caroling. BYOB. (bring your own boots)

#### **25 YEARS AGO THIS MONTH**

*December 4, 1983*

This afternoon everyone is invited to join the youth group in an intergenerational activity of Roller Skating at Al's in Enfield

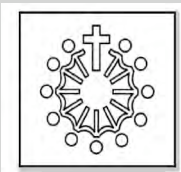
*December 7, 1983*

Candlelighters met in the Millen Room, a good group showed up with young girls included. Beth Sargent demonstrated how to make cloth boxes, Mary G. showed fabric picture frames and Ruth Ann showed candle wicking. We were all given a chance to try that. Doreen Beidler also supplied us with ribbons and everything to make angels.

*December 25, 1983*

Christmas Sunday Worship at 10:30 includes the puppet play "The Day the Animals Talked".

## Taftsville Chapel Mennonite Fellowship



*Located in the village of Taftsville,  
one block south of Rte. 4 on  
Happy Valley Rd.*

**Randy Good, Pastor**

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<http://www.taftsvillechapel.org/>

Send your contributions for

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OR slip a note in my church mailbox

OR contact a Newsletter Staff Member:

Carie Good, Janet North, and Virginia Schlabach