The Christmas Truce

This month, world leaders gathered in France to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the end of World War I. They visited the battlegrounds and laid wreaths. I was reminded of one of the most wonderful Christmas stories I know that arose from that war. I first heard about it on NPR then a French movie was made about it called Joyeux Noel.

I thought the story was probably mostly myth but in 2001, Professor Stanley Weintraub, a renowned military historian restored the story to history in a book titled Silent Night. It had been lost in the tides of horror that filled the battlefields of Europe in the months and years after 1914.

This forgotten story is one of history’s most powerful Christmas stories.

The war was young, but in the few months since it started in early August, hundreds of thousands had been killed, wounded, or were missing in action. There were pleas for a cessation of hostilities from the Pope and governments not involved in the conflict, but they went unheeded.

In late December, it started. The truce bubbled up from the ranks and became so widespread as to impact almost all of the western front.

No one was ever certain where and how it began, but Christmas Eve literally became a silent night on that battlefield where heretofore the noise of gunfire had been constant and deafening. In spite of orders to the contrary by superiors and in spite of language barriers, peace broke out between sworn enemies.

It began with music, the universal language. Both sides were singing the same Christmas Carols. The language of the lyrics was different, but there was a common melody and a common emotion.

By Christmas Day, Saxon and Anglo-Saxon soldiers had met in the middle of ‘no man’s land’, and were singing Christmas carols together, swapping cigarettes and whiskey, playing soccer, and enjoying each other’s company like civilized human beings.

It still stands as the only time peace spontaneously arose from the lower ranks in a major war, reaching up to the officers and turning sworn enemies into friends. It was as if each side thought they were fraternizing with future friends.

They lit candles on small Christmas trees and serenaded each other with carols. As the power of Christmas grew among them, they broke bread, exchanged addresses and letters, and expressed admiration for one another. And, when their angry superiors ordered them to recommence the shooting, many of them aimed harmlessly high over the heads of their enemies who had become friends.

Surely the forgotten Christmas Truce of 1914 stands as one of the most beautiful
‘TRUCE’, Continued from Page 1

moments in the history of the carnage of war. It did not last because the generals and the bureaucrats insisted that ‘their war’ go on, but it was a thing of beauty while it lasted.

Weintraub wrote, “A celebration of the human spirit, the Christmas Truce remains a moving manifestation of the absurdities of war.”

A little known Scottish poet of that era, Frederick Niven, said it well in his Carol from Flanders which closed with these lines:

“O ye who read this truthful rime
From Flanders kneel and say:
‘God speed the time when every day
Shall be as Christmas Day.’”

May it be so.

Welcome Home

An Overture to Christmas

This year our magical concerts and festive receptions will be held on Saturday, December 8 and Sunday December 9. Both evenings begin at 7 pm. Come home to Piedmont Church and bring your family, friends and neighbors for this special beginning of the Christmas season.

Tickets are available online at PiedmontChurch.org and in the courtyard after Sunday services.

The Music

We get to experience the incredible talent of Dr. Stephen Main conducting our choir and soloists as well as a full orchestra. The concert will start with two carols which the audience gets to sing with the orchestra. Then there will be several pieces composed and/or orchestrated by Steve. An orchestral prelude - Fantasy on a Medieval Carol - Wolcum Yole and All this night shrill Chanticleer, favorites from earlier concerts will be reprised.

He has chosen new works that come from outside the typical European tradition. These include a 17th century Burgundian carol, a West Indian Calypso piece and a Norwegian song sung in Norwegian. This last is proving a linguistic challenge for the choir! Two carols for orchestra, choir and audience will close the concert.

Volunteers Needed

These wonderful events don’t happen without the efforts of many volunteers. Can you help us? We need people to take tickets and usher at the concerts. At the receptions we need people to pour wine, serve and keep the buffet table full and to clean up during and at the end of the evening.

Perhaps you can come one evening with friends and family and then volunteer the other night. If you can help, please email patleicher@gmail.com or stop by the ticket table on Sunday and let us know. Thanks so much.

Pick up a yard sign after worship services to help spread the news about this year’s concert!
Celebrating 15 Years Of The Alternative Gift Market

For 15 years, our church has hosted its annual Alternative Gift Market (AGM). In that time, we’ve raised over $750,000 for charitable organizations from the East Bay to around the world.

When you purchase an “alternative gift,” you honor a loved one, a friend or a colleague and at the same time you give tangible help to some people in desperate need. What could be a better way to celebrate the birth of Jesus?

This year, the AGM takes place at Piedmont Church on Sunday, December 9, 16 and 23. You can expect to receive a full catalog of gifts soon after Thanksgiving and you can participate online as well. Contact Dr. Don Ashburn for more information at Don@PiedmontChurch.org.

Engagement Workgroup Takes Next Steps

BY MAGGIE SPENCER

The engagement process was undertaken to ensure that Piedmont Community Church is the best it can be now and that it remains a vibrant and strong Christian community for the next 100 years.

The work resulted in a wealth of information both about what our congregants think works well and what needs improvement.

Members were generous with their opinions, ideas, praise and wishes. All involved, including a 9-person Engagement Workgroup formed by the Board of Trustees, under the leadership of Dr. Don Ashburn, are still digesting the data.

The results are clear in many respects. They demonstrate our desire to provide an oasis based on the Christian principles of kindness, justice and humility that embodies a culture of caring for each other and the greater world.

This requires that we provide multiple opportunities for congregants to serve, to be served, to socialize, to learn, to lead and to be together in worship in both joyful and challenging times.

During the past year, many steps were taken by staff and lay leadership to respond to the information gathered.

The Engagement Workgroup is reviewing steps not yet undertaken or completed that we feel will provide real value as we continue to think about and implement ways to grow engagement at Piedmont Church.

A preliminary recommendation will be presented to the Board of Trustees during their December meeting with a finalized recommendation delivered to the Board in January.

Traditional Pageant Favorite For Many

Our annual Children’s Christmas Pageant will take place Sunday, December 16 at 5:30 pm in the sanctuary. Our children will sing Christmas carols and perform in Radio Station Y-U-L-E, a Christmas play about the Nativity arranged by Wayne Guidici.

The Salvation Army Band will be joining us for the 48th year. The pageant is followed by the Advent Dinner.

This is a fun event for everyone. Please come and bring your friends and family. This is a great way to enjoy the Christmas season. Contact Leslie Quantz at Leslie@PiedmontChurch.org

Photo By Michael Barber
Notes from the Choir
An Americana Christmas

BY SCOTT FITZGERRELL

On Sunday, December 2, just a week before our big Christmas concert, we will present our first-ever Americana Christmas service, featuring our fabulous lead singers and a crackerjack string band with Mitch Polzak directing.

Building on the format we’ve used over the years for the June Americana services, we’ve rounded up a bevy of Christmas music that sits squarely in the folk/country/gospel realm.

Here’s what’s up:

For the prelude, we’ll present Tina Harrington’s arrangement of *Brightest and Best*, a traditional Anglican hymn that will here take on the unmistakable flavor of a cappella, Southern shape-note singing.

Onward to the anthem slot, right after The Lord’s Prayer: for this, our own Sylvia Sudat has arranged *Cradle Hymn*, a heartbreaker full of sweetness and light, with Steve holding forth on fiddle.

For the offertory, right after the sermon, it will be Sylvia’s arrangement of *Light of the Stable*, made famous in Americana circles by Emmylou Harris.

Since it’s Communion Sunday, we’ll do Tina’s arrangement of *Shall We Break Bread Together*.

And finally, to shake the dust from the rafters, we’ll conclude with a postlude: *Last Day of the Year*, which Tina is adapting to our band. It’s a bluesy rocker with likely roots in an old call-and-response “field holler.” It will send you out into your Advent Sunday with a song in your heart.

See you in church!

New Rideshare Ministry Connects Riders, Drivers

We’re forming a pool of drivers who would be able to give rides to Piedmont Church to our members who don’t drive (occasionally or regularly, one way or both, your choice).

Please contact Linda McClain, lindamcclain@me.com or (510) 220-3111 to join this important ministry.

Memorial Poinsettias

The sanctuary will be adorned for Christmas with traditional poinsettias in memory or honor of someone special. To donate a plant, fill out this form before December 19, attach your check and mail to Piedmont Community Church, 400 Highland Ave., Piedmont, 94611, or drop off in the office. Make check payable to Piedmont Church.

Enclosed is $______ ($15 per plant)  Donor Name __________________________

Donor Address __________________________________________________________

Give in Honor / Memory (circle one) of: ____________________________________
2019 Stewardship Campaign

Our 2019 Stewardship Committee is asking all who have not yet pledged to do so this month. Pledging provides our church with means to budget for the coming year.

The 2019 campaign, Because of You, recognizes that the many ministries and missions of Piedmont Community Church are possible only with your financial support.

Our pledge is a reflection of God’s blessings to us. By returning a percentage of our income for His work, we express gratitude.

We ask that you prayerfully consider your gift and return your pledge card, or pledge online.

If you did not receive a card by mail, they are available in the narthex. You can also fill out a card online, or set up pledge payments, at PiedmontChurch.org/pledge

Charitable Contribution Strategies and the New Tax Law

■ BY JOHN CHIANG

With the New Tax Law, which was signed into law on December 22, 2017, most taxpayers will claim the Standard Deduction and have lost the benefit of Itemized Deductions. Charitable contributions are still deductible, but in many cases, with the limitations of deductible taxes and mortgage interest, coupled with the elimination of miscellaneous deductions, many will fall below the Standard Deduction amount.

Here are some strategies for you to consider:

- For those who are 70-1/2 and over, you are eligible to do a QCD (qualified charitable distribution) – whereby you can distribute up to $100,000 of your annual RMD (required minimum distribution) to the church or other qualified 501(c)(3) public charity, enabling you to avoid paying income taxes on that amount.

- Consider bunching up multi-year charitable contributions into one year, along with your other eligible deductions, to exceed the Standard Deduction amount.

These are just some strategies to be discussed with your personal tax advisor.

John Chiang is a CPA and member of the church Finance Committee

‘Just Breathe’

Classes In Chapel

■ BY SARA HIRSCH

No dogma or agenda and open to everyone in this sweet room in the heart of Piedmont. Find the silence between the noise in this class designed to guide you through silent meditation.

Each class will start with gentle stretches for 15 minutes followed by breathing exercises.

Prepared to meditate, either sitting in a chair or on the floor, the next 20 minutes will be silent.

Bring a sticky mat if you plan to be on the floor (there is carpet in the chapel) and a pillow if you plan to sit on a chair. Tuesdays at 5:30 pm.

Deaths

Betsy Wagener died November 3. Her service was held at Piedmont Community Church on Friday, November 9.

Baptisms

Lucas William Fell, son of Erin Light Fell and Blake Uychinco Fell, was baptized October 21.

Alexander Charles Fell, son of Erin Light Fell and Blake Uychinco Fell, was baptized October 21.

Molly Katherine Wagener, daughter of Sarah and Peter Wagener, was baptized November 9.

Quinn Marie Wagener, daughter of Sarah and Peter Wagener, was baptized November 9.

Jerry & Julie Wu were baptised on Sunday, November 11
Worship Video, Audio Online

Our full worship services, including music, sermons and congregational singing, are now available as videos at PiedmontChurch.org

Our worship videos are viewed nearly 1,000 times each week on our website and social media, providing access to our music and message to a wider audience.

Carol Singing Compliments Piedmont Event

BY JUDY FOREMAN

Everyone is invited to Guild Hall Wednesday, December 5 at 7:30 pm for an evening of old-fashioned Christmas caroling, hot cider and wonderful treats.

We will gather around a roaring fire after the tree lighting in Piedmont Park and sing along with the Chancel Choir under the direction of Steve Main. Don’t miss this wonderful Piedmont Community Church tradition. Fun for the entire family.

Tiny Houses, Big Hearts

On Veterans Day Monday, November 12, our Piedmont high school students constructed 3 play houses for Blue Star Families from Travis Air Force Base.

Adopt-A-Family

Piedmont Church and CityTeam Ministries work together in a Christmas gift-giving program. CityTeam has identified 14 Oakland area families, totaling 73 persons, in need of food and Christmas gifts.

Each family has filled out a family profile with age, clothing size and gift ideas. Some families may request gift cards so they can shop for their own family’s gifts or food. Adopt one or more persons, or an entire family, for whom to buy gifts. Gifts are dropped off at the church. CityTeam handles the distribution.

Sign up beginning Sunday, November 25 at the Adopt-a-Family table following services. Contact Charlie Wood at (408) 623-7960 or John Quantz at (510) 421-3346 for information.

Dr. Stephen Main festively provides accompaniment for carolers in Guild Hall last December following the city tree lighting ceremony. Photo by Michael Barber
Each Sunday, we gather to celebrate our faith and our friendships during worship at 9 and 10:30 am.

December 2
Americana Sunday
Communion Sunday
WHY WAIT?
Dr. William McNabb, preaching
Isaiah 40:28-31; Romans 8:18-25

December 9
THE GREATEST GIFT
Dr. William McNabb, preaching
1 Corinthians 12:30-13:13

December 16
PASSAGES TO PONDER
Dr. William McNabb, preaching
Luke 2:16-20; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-28

December 23
Dr. Don Ashburn preaching
See page 1 for Christmas Eve worship service schedule

MONTH OF SUNDAYS

In December we will be studying the season of Advent:
December 2 - Advent 1 - Hope
December 9 - Advent 2 - Peace
December 16 - Advent 3 - Joy
December 23 - Advent 4 - Love

Contact Leslie Quantz with questions at Leslie@PiedmontChurch.org or (510) 547-5700 ext.109

SUNDAY SCHOOL

In December we will be studying the season of Advent:

THOU SHALT LAUGH

“What’s wrong, Bob?” asked the pastor.
“I need you to pray for my hearing,” said Bob.
The pastor put his hands on Bob’s ears and prayed. When he was done, he asked, “So how’s your hearing?”
“I don’t know,” said Bob.
“It isn’t until next Tuesday.”
**Saturday, December 1** - Volunteer to Serve Lunch with CityTeam (ages 12 and over), 11am – 2pm, 722 Washington St., Oakland

- Volunteer to Serve Dinner with CityTeam (ages 14 and over), 5 pm - 7pm, 722 Washington St., Oakland

**Sunday, December 2** - Communion & Americana Sunday

**Monday, December 3** - Board of Deacons, 7 pm, Guild Parlor

**Wednesday, December 5** - Coffee and Conversation for Seniors, 9:30 - 11:30 am, Guild Parlor

- Christmas Tree Lighting Reception - 7:30 pm, Guild Hall

**Friday, December 7** - KIDZ Club, 3:30 pm, Youth Room

**Saturday, December 8** - Annual Christmas Concert and Reception, 7 pm Sanctuary & Guild Hall

**Sunday, December 9** - Alternative Gift Market and Altar Guild Bake Sale, Murdock/Barton Rooms

- Annual Christmas Concert and Reception, 7 pm Sanctuary, Guild Hall

**Monday, December 10** - Needles and Hooks Shared Interest Group, 2-4 pm, Guild Parlor

**Tuesday, December 12** - Board of Trustees, 7 pm, Guild Parlor

**Friday, December 14** - Adult Fellowship Christmas Party

**Sunday, December 16** - Alternative Gift Market, Guild Hall

- Christmas Pageant, 5:30 pm, Sanctuary

- Advent Dinner, 6:15 pm, Guild Hall

**Monday, December 17** - Board of Christian Education, 6:45 pm, Guild Parlor

- MAT, 7 pm, Staff Workroom

**Wednesday, December 18** - Coffee and Conversation for Seniors, 9:30 - 11:30 am, Guild Parlor

**Sunday, December 23** - Alternative Gift Market, Guild Hall

**Monday, December 24** - Christmas Eve Worship Services, 5 pm, 9 pm, 11 pm

**Tuesday, December 25** - Christmas Day, office closed

**Wednesday, December 26** - office closed

### Recurring Events

**Sundays**
- Children’s Sunday School, 10:30 am, Christian Education Building
- Journey (High School Sunday School), 10:30 am, Youth Room
- Rock, 5 pm, Youth Room

**Mondays**
- Piedmont Gardens Bible Study, 10 am, Piedmont Gardens
- Spiritual Formation Group, 4:30 pm, Guild Parlor

**Tuesdays**
- Rock Pizza Lunch, Youth Room
- Just Breathe, 5:30 pm, Chapel
- Handbells, 6:30 pm, Clara Barton Room
- Small Group Bible Study, 7 pm, home of Bob and Judy Wright Call Judy Wright (510) 325-3083 or Dottie Hutch (203) 500-9097

**Wednesdays**
- LiveWire, 2:15 – 3:30 pm, Youth Room
- Chancel Choir, 7:30 pm, Lindamood Choir Room

**Thursdays**
- Women’s Bible Study, 10 am Guild Parlor
- Walking Together, 7 pm, Guild Parlor

**Saturdays**
- Men’s Bible Study, 7:30 am, Founders Room