

St. Philip's Newsletter

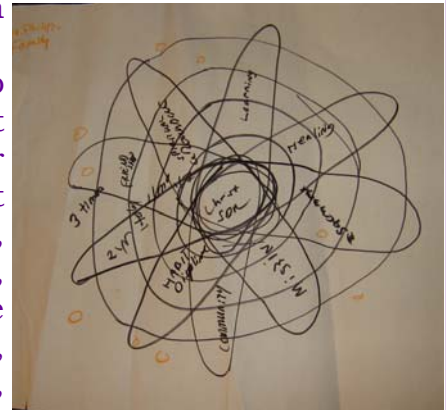
Winter Issue December 2007—January 2008

Pastor's Letter *What are we called to do?*

Dear people of St. Philip's,

Thank you for your fantastic participation in our "Neighborhood Visitation" gatherings. It was a joy to meet with people in small groupings, in your living rooms, getting to know one another better. It was fun finding a way to share our various experiences in ministry here at St. Philip's. The "model" we created together, with "Christ" at the center and rotations of participation with ellipses of ministry involvement, looked something like a model of an atom—full of energy and connection! [see photo] This model gave us a visual representation of the incredible level of activity happening for so many people here at St. Philip's. I loved the way the model revealed how we are connected through our attraction to the Christ at the center. I deeply appreciate your perspectives, and your willingness to share personally and deeply about what matters most to you in terms of your relationship to St. Philip's faith community.

During our sharing, we discovered that we come to St. Philip's for various reasons—not all of one mind, but all centered around one spiritual purpose. One way or the other we are here to experience the holiness of Christ at the center. Whether we come for fellowship, worship, learning, service, healing, Bible study, a sense of duty, habit, sacramental expectation, outreach to the community, extended family, children, faith quest, intellectual "sparing", music, discipleship, charity, prayer, education, 12 step commitment, love, forgiveness, family



values, or just to see friends—whatever our reason for coming, no matter how often we come, we all recognize that we are united by the Church's intent to experience the presence of Christ, the Son of God, at the center of our time here.

Some of us noticed some things that are lacking or that we would like to see available here at St. Philip's in the future. The number one request is to have more Adult Christian formation opportunities offered in a variety of formats: more adult Bible study; more intellectually nurturing, spiritually satisfying offerings; perhaps a women's fellowship; a men's retreat [we're planning our first women's retreat for February]; guest speakers; workshops; perhaps the Alpha program; "Christianity

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101”; and a second level Christianity course. In addition to adult Christian education many also wanted to have us do more dinner groups and Christian fellowship, to nurture our faith community and incorporate new people; some want us to engage in more service activities as teams of people reaching out to those in need (especially if the Interfaith Satellite Homeless Shelter is housed elsewhere).

A number one question for some people was clearer communication and disclosure regarding the finances of St. Philip’s. Please take note: finances have been stabilized during 2007! We want to celebrate your generosity in helping to make that possible. We also applaud our Finance Team, under the leadership of Treasurer, Steve Dodds, for managing our funds well, and Karin Clift of our office staff for paying all our bills in a timely fashion. Additionally, Debby Dodds is to be commended for her tremendous efforts in managing our upstairs office rentals, which generate a significant portion of our annual income. In 2008 we will also celebrate a gift of \$10,000. given to St. Philip’s from a family of St. Jude’s, Cupertino, which will be used for a special children/youth ministry project. (Please read more about this elsewhere in this newsletter.)

In response to the desire to have more Adult Christian formation offerings at St. Philip’s, we have seen various individuals come forth with a variety of opportunities: Christopher Jones created an opportunity for an Advent workshop with the Labyrinth; in 2008 Marcus Granger-Jones is beginning an evening Bible study group focusing on Prayer; The Rev. Bill Kelly is leading a study of Marcus Borg’s book, “Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time”; Karen Krestensen, Counselor, is working with Youth Mentor Carter Potts to develop a monthly support group for parents; and my husband Jim and I are leading a Bible study in our home. (Read more elsewhere.) Others are working on ways to create more fellowship opportunities open to all people of St. Philip’s and their friends who may not yet worship here.

Our new Bishop, Mary Gray-Reeves, has invited all of us to enter into “a year of wonder”—that is a time of reflecting, listening, observing where God is calling us to do. A resolution was passed at Convention asking that “we commit ourselves to listen to God’s call and expand our thinking, searching for mind-changing, limitless ideas and raising up leaders from all congregations.” To that end, I ask that each of you take some time in the next two to three months to ponder what is most important to you in your quest for God. We will do more of “Neighborhood Visitations” to share ideas and see what God is calling us to do. We have been given the gift of this amazing faith community and a tremendous facility in which to do fulfill God’s mission “to restore all persons into unity with God and each other through Christ.”

As we celebrate Christ’s presence in this world in the remembrance of his birth, let us seek ways to use the hope offered here to guide us into a future of offering spiritual support to the people of Scotts Valley all for the glory of God.

Peace to you and your loved ones this Christmas and always,

Pastor Mary and Jim Blessing

B. C. BITES

November 27, 2007 Bishop's Committee Meeting Summary

By: Jane Ellis, Bishop's Committee Clerk

Treasurer's Report: Income is roughly \$4,000 below budget, in large part due to the loss of projected income from the Harvest Fair. It was noted that no new pledges have been received this year, despite the addition of a number of families. This information led to a discussion of the need for a "Newcomer" class or other mechanism to welcome and integrate new families.

The offering at the Thanksgiving service on November 20 amounted to \$240, to be contributed to I.S.S.P. The December 18 meeting will focus on budget preparation.

Jan Martin is in the process of preparing the 2006 audit and expects to be completed by the end of the year.

Stewardship: Pledges have been received to date amounting to about \$109K, with a projected total of \$137K if about 10 families who pledged last year, but have not yet returned a 2008 pledge intention, contribute at the same rate.

Nibbles:

Tod reported that a home-school group has arranged to help serve the homeless dinner on four Thursdays.

February 3, 2008 is Scout Sunday and Tim, who is a Scout Den Leader, offered to have his den raise funds for a new U. S. flag for St. Philip's and to hold a flag retirement ceremony for the old flag, after the service on that Sunday. His offer was gratefully accepted.

Dave Sanguinetti, Susan Seaburg and Tim Johnson will have completed their terms on the B.C. in January. However, Tim, who came on board in June of 2006 to fulfill resigning member Gene Pearson's term, is eligible to serve a further full term.

St.Philip's 20th Celebration event is highlighted in the December Diocesan Newsletter, Along the Kings Highway. Find the article and photo at <http://www.edecr.org/f/News-ATKH-2007-12.pdf>, page 5, or the printed copy available in the church foyer.

Generous Gift for St. Philip's:

A family from St. Jude's Episcopal Church, Cupertino, donated a special gift of \$10,000.00 to St. Philip's, to be used for special ministry for youth and families. The couple gave this gift in appreciation for the "significant pastoral ministry Pastor Mary offered our family in a time of extreme need. Her guidance made all the difference not just to us, but to many families of St. Jude's."

The generosity of this family is to be held in trust as we prayerfully consider an appropriate use for youth and family ministry that will benefit not just the people of St. Philip's, but the community of Scotts Valley. Pastor Mary has shared a vision of creating a "youth center" after school club at St. Philip's open to all youth of Scotts Valley. One possibility is to use this \$10,000.00 gift as seed money, working with community members of Scotts Valley to raise other funds for a youth center.

Pastor Mary was recently invited to be the keynote speaker at the Kiwanis Club Christmas Breakfast held at Peachwood's Restaurant. Kiwanis is a service organization that holds the vision of "changing the world, one child, one community at a time." When she shared the vision of working with community leaders to form a youth center at St. Philip's, members of Kiwanis came forward with genuine interest. Marshall Wolfe, Treasurer of the Scotts Valley Kiwanis Club, has offered to assist in the effort to create a strong funding base for a possible youth center at St. Philip's. Camilla Shaffer and Dennis Potts, members of St. Philip's Bishop's Committee, are also helping to research and brainstorm ideas on the viability of creating a youth center.



As 2008 takes form, look for ways that you can offer your time, talent and treasure to participate in the possible formation of a youth center at St. Philip's. We invite any and all of you to be a part of this exciting venture with the community of Scotts Valley.

Angel Church of the Year

St. Philip's was honored as "Angel-Church of the Year" at the First Annual Valley Churches United Holiday Gala at Scopazzi's Restaurant in Boulder Creek. The Gala dinner was held to raise funds for the VCUM Emergency Food Pantry and Holiday Projects and included an auction and raffle. The raffle was sponsored by the Sons of California Motorcycle Club and raised over \$1200 for the VCUM. Pastor Mary won a Harley Davidson portable cooler/picnic bag to go with her HARLEY!



Pastor Mary Blessing and Julie O'Brien, Sunday School Coordinator, accepted the award presented by Annette Marcum and County Supervisor Mark Stone. Along with a plaque from VCUM, St. Philip's received recognition from U.S. Representative Anna Eschoo, Assembly member John Laird and Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors for outstanding service to VCUM. VCUM hopes that our annual "Blessing of the Backpacks" and school supply drive will serve as a model for other churches to help children in our community start school with items they need to succeed in the classroom.

St. Philip's Finances at a glance.....

Thanks to all of you, St. Philip's Finances have been stabilizing over this past year. We are very grateful for your generous donations and commitments to pledge giving that has enabled us to pay our bills and decrease our debt. Financial freedom brings new possibilities for ministry.

In response to requests that we report finances more regularly, we offer this simple summary. Look also at monthly reports in the Newsletter in the minutes of the Bishop's Committee, your governing board responsible for the stewardship of our property and finances.

Thank you if you have offered a pledge of financial support in 2008, and if you have not, won't please consider doing so? Please call the church office, 438-4360, or email office@stphilip-sv.org to receive a pledge card.

St. Philip's finances are in good shape as we near the end 2007. As of October 31, 2007, our 2007 Budget is close to balanced:

Income is close to "on target" at \$155,151.86 vs. \$158,866.70 budget.

Pledges on target, Facilities Use & Rental above target, Plate and New Pledges short

Expenses below budget at \$155,344.90 vs. \$157,933.00 budgeted.

Bottom line YTD a loss of \$193.04 vs. a budgeted breakeven.

To date, 2007 has been a year of successfully managing our expenses in line with our income. Let's each do our part to complete this year on budget and work to expand St. Philips ministries in 2008.

Finance Team: Steve Dodds, Treasurer, Bob O'Brien, Bookkeeper, David Sanguinetti, Stewardship Chair, Marcus Granger-Jones, former Bookkeeper,

Refreshments

First of all I would like to thank everyone who without fail responds to my appeal for people to provide refreshments for Coffee Hour after the 10:00 am. service. You are stars!! Thank you, and thank you, and thank you!!

Until the end of the year, I would ask if you would consider sending me an email with an offer to provide refreshments for the faithful between now and year end. Please let me know if you can help with one of the many services that are approaching way too fast! There are several wonderful Advent celebrations for which we provide refreshments, such as the Pageant, the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols, as well as the two Christmas Eve services. I still need people for the regular Sunday refreshments as well. You don't have to do it all!! Just let me know when you are available and we shall give you whatever help you need. Here's the new part.....

Starting in the New Year, we shall try sign up for Coffee Hour in a new manner. There is a brand, spanking new Sign Up poster in the foyer, and you are invited to sign up exactly as you do for the Flower Sign-Up. What better way to celebrate a family birthday, anniversary, graduation or any other milestone than by providing the refreshments for the nearest Sunday. That way we can all share the festivities. You can even do it.....just because!

Also, another new idea!! If cooking is not your thing, you can sign up and then send me an email to mummpo@sbcglobal.net and let me know how much you would like me to spend on your behalf and I will make sure your refreshments are provided!

So look for the sign-up and secure your favorite dates throughout the year. Oh, and don't worry, if no one signs up we will make sure there are cookies to go with the coffee!

Feeding His flock,
Lucy Gowan

A NOTE FROM A NOVICE MARATHONER...

My deepest thanks to all the St. Philip's members who encouraged and supported me through my efforts over the last five months to train for a marathon and raise funds for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society..... Well, if you haven't heard from me already, I did it! I completed 26.2 miles on a glorious sunny day in San Francisco and raised over \$9000 for the cause. It was an amazing experience and, give or take a toenail or two, I am glad to have completed the project in one piece and to have helped in the fight for a cure for blood cancers. The highlight of the whole program was crossing the finish line in San Francisco with Marissa running along side me, living evidence of the society at work!

Camilla S.



Camilla & Marissa crossing the finishing line—the smiles say it all!

CHRISTMAS CARDS: HOPE WITH SUDAN

In 1987 over 40,000 young boys and girls fled across Sudan on foot to take refuge in Ethiopia, and later Kenya. The vast majority of these children, popularly called the "Lost Boys (and Girls) of Sudan," lost their families and their homeland in the brutal civil war that forced their flight.

Conflict in Sudan continues to this day, and we hear about Darfur in the news regularly. Often the word "genocide" is associated with Darfur. The "lost boys and girls" are now young adults in their 20s. A number of them have been brought to the United States from the refugee camps in Kenya through Catholic Charities. Several have been in San Jose for the past 4 or 5 years, and their lives have been centered at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral. Most of these young Sudanese are Episcopalians. One is on the Vestry at Trinity.

Father Jerry Drino, affiliated with Trinity Cathedral is in charge of the Sudanese ministry in San Jose and is an active advocate for them especially in furthering their education. All of the young men and women are in college first at the community colleges and then on to university. The first one graduated from Stanford last year and will soon depart for Kenya to assist with the educational program in Kenya. Through their own experience they know the value of education to build productive lives. They believe in the eventual power of education to rebuild their homeland. Hope with Sudan seeks to build communities of support to enable the "lost boys and girls of Sudan" to reach their full potential through education, thus enabling them to return to Africa to provide schooling for the children in the refugee camps.

There are currently Christmas cards for sale which will benefit Hope with Sudan and help to provide education for the children in the refugee camps. There is currently little to none available, not even pencils and paper, let alone books. A packet of 5 cards costs \$7.50, of which \$5.00 is a tax-deductible contribution. These donations directly educate and support the "lost boys and girls of Sudan." Karen Krestensen will be available after church with a few packets of cards if you are interested.

Diocesan Youth Mission Trips for 2008:

Next summer our youth will have the opportunity to serve Native American populations in Nevada through Sierra Service Project.

<http://www.sierraserviceproject.org>

Our diocese has a 5-year history of teaming with SSP for our mission trips. This year we plan to send two groups to the Walker River Paiute reservation in early summer, coordinated by Leann Brooks and Robin Denney.

The first trip, **June 29-July 5**, is for high school youth who will be entering 9th grade in the fall of 2008 through those graduating in the summer of 2008. Experienced counselors from ECR (including Bishop Mary) will accompany our youth and other church youth groups will join us at the reservation.

The second trip, **July 14-19**, is a brand new opportunity for Middle School students and is for youth entering 6th through 8th grades in the fall. This will be a smaller group and the program is being specially crafted for the younger audience.

Youth Katrina Relief Summer Mission Trip: June 14-20, 2008: Open to all Junior High and High School Students. Spend a week working to provide better housing for our gulf coast neighbors with Lutheran Episcopal Services in Mississippi. There is a wide variety of jobs we might do: gut a damaged home, work in the kitchen, dig a foundation, paint, clean the dorm, frame, install sheet-rock, remove debris from a home, or finish out a home. Everyone will have the opportunity to do meaningful work in restoring the beauty and dignity to the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Middle School News

Our "Something 13" middle school Sunday class recently learned about how to pray in a group context. With the leadership of mentor, Laura Gonzalez, they created a group prayer the weekend after Thanksgiving which was shared in our Children's Presentation time after worship. It was done in "mad lib" style, with each person adding a phrase. Perhaps you would like to create a prayer like this some day:

Almighty God,
Who answers many prayers,
Let us have MORE SLEEP,
Help us sleep longer,
We will be a lot more awake,
Who lives and reigns with you
And the Holy Spirit,



Our Sunday School celebrated All Saints' Day with their traditional parade of saints. The children learned about historical saints and also how we are all saints. Costumes and song abounded in this fun festival!

Adult Christian Education Expands - Two more opportunities to explore your faith.

An Invitation to Meet Jesus - Again!

For most of my adult life, I have sought to know the historical Jesus Christ. When, fifteen years ago, I first heard, met, and then studied with New Testament scholar Marcus Borg, I was reawakened to the importance and spiritual value of the "quest for the historical Jesus."

In our Church calendar, the time between Christmas and Holy Week, between the cradle and the cross, offers a first-rate opportunity to renew our acquaintance with Jesus, to meet Jesus *again*.

Pastor Mary has invited me to lead a study series in the New Year, to be based on the Borg book *Meeting Jesus Again - for the First Time , the Historical Jesus & the Heart of Contemporary Faith**. With the consent of the regular Sunday nine o'clock Bible study group and leader, David Sanguinetti, we have chosen the time slot, 9:00 a.m., for eight Sunday morning book study sessions, starting January 6 and continuing, with an occasional pause, into early March. We will all have a chance to renew our understanding of Jesus, and our own faith.

Marcus Borg's writing is straightforward and easily read. The book will make a great Christmas gift. It is available on line for \$10.00 new, or for less used. We can do a group order if there are sufficient requests by December 21.

Please indicate your readiness to join the class to me, by leaving a note for me at the church, or by phone at 438-6423 or e-mail at kellkrest@aol.com. If enough people are interested, we can also hold a similar course at another time and place.

Rev. Bill Kelly

Learn It... Live It..... Prayer

*A new bible study opportunity
at the home of Marcus & Vicky
Granger-Jones
7.30 - 9.00 p.m., Monday Evenings*

1/14 : Praise
1/21: Thanksgiving
1/28: Confession
2/4: Petition
2/11: Intercession
3/25: Listening to God
3/2: The Lord's Prayer

This seven-session Bible study focuses on prayer, the communication we have with God. The study aims to demystify prayer through learning what the scripture has to say about prayer and you'll find plenty of opportunities to practice different kinds of prayer individually and as a group.

We have copies of the study available and everybody is welcome as either a regular attendee or drop in.

For more information or directions please contact Marcus at granger-jones@sbcglboal.net or 438 7658.

Marcus G-J

PAPER OR PLASTIC? TRY BYOB (Bring Your Own Bag)

Continuing thoughts on how we can use our earth's resources more wisely: The long-standing question... paper or plastic?... The debate has been heated, but the bottom line is that both options support our "throw-away" society: their manufacture gobbles up natural resources and creates pollution. Once used, they add to the amount of waste on the earth, and in the case of plastic bags, result in damaging effects on wildlife and the environment.

From the introduction of plastic sandwich bags in 1957, the use of plastic shopping bags was widespread by the 1980s. Globally, each year, we now use anywhere from 500 billion to 5 trillion. A number of countries – Ireland, Taiwan, South Africa, Australia and Bangladesh – have taxed or banned the use of plastic bags, reducing their presence in landfills by 95%. In 2002 Bangladesh became the first country to ban plastic bags altogether when they were found to be clogging drains in the monsoon rains, causing severe flooding.

The statistics are sobering: shoppers accept on average five bags per week. In the USA that adds up to at least 84 billion bags annually, requiring 12 million barrels of oil for their manufacture. Only one in every 200 bags is recycled, and those that end up in the landfill take up to one thousand years to break down into tiny toxic particles that contaminate our soil and water. The plastic bags that end up in the ocean kill up to one million sea creatures every year, such as birds, whales, seals, and sea turtles.

The good news is that the tide is turning, albeit slowly. In the U.K. the small Devon town of Modbury became the first in Europe to ban plastic bags from its shops earlier this year. The self-imposed ban followed a campaign there led by a wildlife camerawoman who was moved after filming the devastating effects of plastic bags on marine life in Hawaii. Now 50 other UK towns are following Modbury's lead! Here in the US, 30 rural Alaskan towns have banned plastic bags, and locally, San Francisco and Oakland have approved a ban on the bags, favoring the use of compostable bags made of cornstarch or recyclable paper.

At the end of the day using reusable shopping bags is the real answer! It's good to see they are more readily available, even in mainstream stores, although websites like ReusableBags.com offer some fun and environmentally friendly choices! If anyone is interested in freeing our community from the plastic bag, please email me, Camilla Shaffer at zebraparis@sbcglobal.net.

Greens, Poinsettias and Decorations for Christmas

Christmas is a wonderful time to remember family and friends with a donation to the Altar Guild Flower fund. The suggested amount is \$35 but any contribution will be gratefully accepted. Please let us know your name and the names of persons you are honoring and any special message you would like included. This information will go in the Christmas Service Bulletins. Donations and sign up sheets can be put in the collection plate or be turned into the office before December 17th.

The Altar Guild members love to fill the with beautiful flowers. We deeply appreciate everyone's help.

Barbara L



Future Events.....Mark your Calendars!

Rehearsals for Christmas Pageant: 11:30 –12:30 Sunday 9th December, 11:30—1:30 Sunday 16th December—light lunch provided

Christmas Pageant: 5:30p.m., Sunday 16th December

An opportunity for Girl & Boy Scouts to meet together and work on the Religious Emblem : 1:00 p.m.—2:00 p.m., January 9,16,23,30

Epiphany Sunday: January 6—Three Kings, Family Service

Annual Meeting and Celebration—Sunday, January 20: All invited for music, food, celebration following the 10:00 service.

Tahoe Winter Retreat—Friday 25th—Sunday 27th

Scouting Sunday : February 2nd 2008: A special service to honor and celebrate the Scouting movement and in particular our local Girl & Boy Scouts. There will be a retiring the flag ceremony.

In the planning stage.....

- Karen Krestensen is working with Youth Mentor Carter Potts to form a monthly Parent Support Group in the new year. Please look for details and invitations to participate in the future.
- Pastor's Bible Study: Pastor Mary and her husband, Jim Blessing, will be offering an evening Bible Study in their home beginning February 2008.

Homeless Ministry : The Sunday School will be putting together Christmas Care packages for 20 ladies who are our guests through the Interfaith Satellite Shelter program. . Please bring any small portable essentials or treats to the church on or before **Sunday 16th December**, so that we can make up the packages. Toiletries, chewing gum, cosmetics, gloves, socks, lotions etc. are all good ideas.

PHILIP'S WOMEN'S RETREAT

You still have time to register for the St. Philip's Women's Retreat to be held at St. Francis Retreat Center in San Juan Bautista from **Friday, 2/22, to Sunday, 2/24**. Our own Pastor Mary will be the Chaplain for the weekend, and we have an experienced and excellent retreat leader in Cathie Jarosz to be our convener and guide.

There will be time for rest and relaxing, walking and talking with friends or alone, reading, and whatever else you may want to do. Give yourself the gift of a weekend away with good women friends where spiritual growth is the emphasis. The cost is \$215. for a shared room and \$260. for a single room. The cost includes all meals starting with dinner on Friday and ending with lunch on Sunday (check-in will begin at 4:00).

If you have any questions, call Karen Krestensen, 438-6423, or email her at karenkrestensen@yahoo.com. A deposit will hold a space for you. You may invite a friend if you'd like to share this experience with someone else who might enjoy it.

* * the * MEANING * OF * CHRISTMAS * * *

By A.
Nonnie
Mouse

Just a week before Christmas I had a visitor. This is how it happened. I just finished the household chores for the night and was preparing to go to bed, when I heard a noise in the front of the house. I opened the door to the front room and to my surprise, Santa himself stepped out next to the fireplace.

"What are you doing?" I started to ask. The words choked up in my throat and I saw he had tears in his eyes. His usual jolly manner was gone. Gone was the eager, boisterous soul we all know. He then answered me with a simple statement:

"TEACH THE CHILDREN!" I was puzzled. What did he mean? He anticipated my question and with one quick movement brought forth a miniature toy bag from behind the tree. As I stood bewildered, Santa said, "Teach the children! Teach them the old meaning of Christmas; the meaning that now-a-days Christmas has forgotten.



Santa then reached in his bag and pulled out a FIR TREE and placed it before the mantle. "Teach the children that the pure green color of the stately fir tree remains green all year round, depicting the everlasting hope of mankind. All the needles point heavenward, making it a symbol of man's thoughts turning toward heaven."



He again reached into his bag and pulled out a brilliant STAR. "Teach the children that the star was the heavenly sign of promises long ago. God promised a Savior for the world, and the star was the sign of fulfillment of His promise."

He then reached into his bag and pulled out a CANDLE. "Teach the children that the candle symbolizes that Christ is the light of the world, and when we see this great light we are reminded of He who displaces the darkness."



Once again he reached into his bag and removed a WREATH and placed it on the tree. "Teach the children that the wreath symbolizes the real nature of love. Real love never ceases. Love is one continuous round of affection."



He then pulled from his bag an ORNAMENT of himself. "Teach the children that I, Santa Claus, symbolize the generosity and good will we feel during the month of December."



He then brought out a HOLLY LEAF. "Teach the children that the holly plant represents immortality. It represents the crown of thorns worn by our Savior. The red holly berries represent the blood shed by Him."



Next he pulled from his bag a GIFT and said, "Teach the children that God so loved the world that he gave his begotten son." Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.



Santa then reached in his bag and pulled out a CANDY CANE and hung it on the tree. "Teach the children that the candy cane represents the shepherds' crook. The crook on the staff helps to bring back strayed sheep to the flock. The candy cane is the symbol that we are our brother's keeper."



He reached in again and pulled out an ANGEL. "Teach the children that it was the angels that heralded in the glorious news of the Savior's birth. The angels sang Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace and good will toward men."



Suddenly I heard a soft tinkling sound, and from his bag he pulled out a BELL. "Teach the children that as the lost sheep are found by the sound of the bell, it should ring mankind to the fold. The bell symbolizes guidance and return."



Santa looked back and was pleased. He looked back at me and I saw that the twinkle was back in his eyes. He said, *"Remember, teach the children the true meaning of Christmas and do not put me in the center, for I am but a humble servant of the One that is, and I bow down to worship him, our LORD, our GOD."*