

# Fourth Avenue Presbyterian Church

November and December 2008

Dear Church family,

This year my family has been eating local vegetables from a farmer up the Hudson River. We started the summer eating mostly greens and produce in crisp and spicy salads. Then in the middle of the summer we received deep purple eggplants and bold red tomatoes. Now we are chomping away on the crunchy root vegetables as the season comes to a close. Journeying through the rhythm of the season with our farmer has been a simple reminder of why churches historically held harvest celebrations (from which our national Thanksgiving holiday originates).

On Thanksgiving we celebrate the natural bounty in God's abundant creation as we sit around a table with those we love. Unlike other holidays which often get carried away in excess and pageantry, Thanksgiving resounds with its simple yet significant message.

2008 has been a memorable and difficult economic year. Retirement pensions, developing countries' GDPs, small businesses, and the average wallet have all shrunk in the wake of the crisis. Maybe, this year as we sit overwhelmed with post-turkey lethargy, instead of preparing for our country's biggest shopping day, we might be more inclined to recognize what we already have... what we have already been given... and where there is need.

*Open our eyes that we may see. . . and be thankful. Amen.*

Peace,  
Rev. David Aja-Sigmon

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## **A Restoration Update**

\*The remaining stained glass windows will be installed by the Brooklyn Stained Glass Conservation Center before December 23<sup>rd</sup>. It has been a long road since August 8, 2007 towards a complete restoration, but we are tremendously excited that our church will be dressed in its finest for the Christmas Eve service.

Countless people have supported the church and worked to help us arrive at this point, so a celebration is most definitely in order! We plan to dedicate all that has been restored in a worship service sometime in early 2009.

## **Upcoming Events**

\*November 9 & 16—Stewardship Sundays will be celebrated. The 16<sup>th</sup> is Commitment Sunday during which we will worshipfully submit our pledges of time, money, and/or talents to God for the coming year.

\*November 23<sup>rd</sup>—Our famous Annual Christmas and Cake Sale is always the Saturday before Thanksgiving. This vital fundraiser and chance to meet our neighbors begins at 9:30am. The sale will continue on Sunday afternoon from 1-4pm; Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Saturday from 12-4pm; and then Sunday from 1-4pm. Any volunteers who would like to help set up for the sale should gather in the fellowship hall on Thursday, November 20<sup>th</sup> at 6:00pm. There will be a signup sheet for those who would like to volunteer for subsequent weekdays and weekend sale dates.

This will be the first Christmas and Cake Sale without Ramona Sichler in a long time. Over the years she famously showed her devotion to the church through her entertaining and tireless labor at the sale. John Sichler has chosen to honor his wife by donating to the church a sign of his creation that can be used to announce the sale for years to come.

\* A tentative date (November 30) has been set for a new members' class. Please speak with David Aja-Sigmon if you are interested.

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\* On December 3<sup>rd</sup> the book club will gather to discuss *Water for Elephants*. All are welcome for coffee, snacks, and discussion. Please speak with Nif Cook for questions or more information.

\* The Children's Community Chorus of Brooklyn will hold its yearly holiday concerts on Saturday, December 6<sup>th</sup> at 7:30pm and Sunday, December 7<sup>th</sup> at 4pm. For tickets, please speak with Lisa Johnson.

\* The first Sunday in Advent will be celebrated through worship with our Hanging of the Greens service on Sunday, November 30<sup>th</sup>.

\* The Women's Association will once again join with the Salvation Army to collect toys for lower income children until the 21<sup>st</sup> of December. Collected items may be placed on the deacon's food pantry table located in the sanctuary. Contact Helen Hadad with questions.

\* We will also be collecting winter hats, scarves, and gloves during Advent for those in need. These items will be distributed at our own church and at the soup kitchen throughout the wintry months.

\* Our annual Christmas potluck dinner, otherwise known as the Christmas Feast, will fill our bellies beginning at 6pm on Saturday, December 20<sup>th</sup>. The Potluck will include both carol singing and a Sunday School play. Look out for a sign-up sheet, which will ask you to list what dish(es) and how many people you will bring, so that we might have an appetizing variety of dishes and provide a sufficient quantity of chairs.

\*The Christmas Eve Service on the 24<sup>th</sup> of December will begin at 7:00pm. If you or your child would like to participate in the Christmas Pageant please speak with Jackie Merhige or Helen Hadad.

## **Please Note:**

Starting in November, the resource table in the fellowship hall will hold catalogs from the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, Heifer International, Church World Service, and a Greater Gift. All four catalogs provide an alternative to customary Christmas shopping, such as sponsoring a family hygiene kit, as well as purchasing health care for orphans, a goat for a community, and beautiful merchandise that directly supports local communities.

## **Mission**

This year the church has already made special mission gifts of nearly a thousand dollars. We have prayed for the work and have designated funds to support the ministry and mission of: the Protestant Church in Beirut, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance after the summer hurricanes, and AIDS orphans and vulnerable children in Africa. The church also donated 200 New Testament Bibles to the Hands of Christ program in Charleston, SC, which provides school supplies, uniforms, and other assistance to low-income children and their families every fall.

## **Special thanks**

Bay Ridge United Church has demonstrated continued generosity and support of our Food Pantry by donating food staples. We are also grateful to the Whitestone Presbyterian Church in Queens, whose vacation bible school this summer provided us a supply of cans, juice boxes, and pasta.

## **Prayer**

A thanksgiving hymn written by Fred Pratt Green:

*For the fruit of all creation, thanks be to God.  
For the gifts to every nation, thanks be to God.  
For the plowing, sowing, reaping,  
silent growth while we are sleeping,  
future needs in earth's safekeeping,  
thanks be to God. Amen.*