

Fourth Avenue Presbyterian Church

November 2009

Dear Church family,

A baby was born in Bethlehem two thousand years ago.

Calling to mind images of countless nativities, I am struck by the impression that all gathered around baby Jesus were seemingly frozen in their poses. This moment merits the pause, though, since we believe it marks the world as forever changed.

Far from beeping monitors, from Blackberries and iPhones transmitting messages, from worries of how long maternity leave will last, from untaken sick-leave for fear of downsizing, from anxiety over the terror of the child's new world, and far from sports tickers and celebrity gossip, the nativity moment loomed large and the world stood still in the balance.

While I have been around too many babies to naively believe that they remain static in those positions I do believe that at Jesus' birth, time was taken to cherish the moment with those gathered. I can't imagine them saying, "Behold, unto us a baby is born! . . . Okay, now pack up the donkey and turn off that star. But be careful, I want to bring it out next year for his birthday."

This season it is my hope that as we tell the story of Christmas in our myriad ways (singing hymns and carols, telling stories and jokes, acting out and displaying the nativity, laughing and talking at the potluck, giving to the needy, volunteering, gathering with family) and wait for the baby's return, that we also pause with those around us to cherish the moments and significance of the season.

*Let all mortal flesh keep silence,
And with fear and trembling stand;
Ponder nothing earthly-minded,
For with blessing in his hand,
Christ our God to earth descendeth,
Our full homage to demand.
(From a liturgy of St. James, 4th century)*

Peace,
Rev. David Aja-Sigmon

Quoteworthy

The following playful, poetic rendering of present-day Brooklyn, captures the heart of the unique and wondrous borough in which we aspire to be church:

"Today Brooklyn is Prospect Heights with its late-night barbershops, all fabulous hair and atomic white light at 12am, or Coney Island, a seasonal experiment in radical democracy held in a riot of colors and sound-tracked to amusement-park songs. It's the Friday-afternoon call to prayer in Bedford-Stuyvesant. Brooklyn is a tourist-free Chinatown in Sunset Park or the dollar stores of Flatbush Avenue that spill their wares onto the noisy street and away from their weeping, scarred, and aching buildings. It's dreadlocked West Indians flying kites in Prospect Park or the colony of Middle American defectors in Williamsburg, urban hipsters costumed in androgynous jeans and monotonous tattoos. It's the bourgeoisie of Brooklyn Heights, living in stately grace but with barely suppressed feelings of self-loathing for not owning a 212 area code. Brooklyn is the slowly dissolving Italian hub of Bensonhurst, the Syrian Jews of Ocean Parkway, and the Pakistanis of Coney Island Avenue. It is the birds of Green-Wood Cemetery singing their songs to the Civil War dead, upper-crust Haitians living well in Midwood Estates, and intrepid diners visiting Bay Ridge's transplanted Mediterranean coast, where, high on the old Nordic Third Avenue, sea air mingles with the garlic

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aromas floating out of the Arab, Greek, and Italian eateries that line the street. Brooklyn is the informal urban apartheid of Eastern Parkway, the soft socialism of Park Slope, the Russian capitalism of Brighton Beach. It's the Salt Marshes of Marine Park, the roast beef sandwiches on Nostrand Avenue, DiFara's Pizza, Vox Pop, and Vinegar Hill. Brooklyn is the dangerous rush of traffic on Atlantic Avenue, where bus exhaust mixes with the smells of fresh bread and Arabic spices; its is the madness of Pacific Street, where parents seek refuge from the urban cacophony in its tiny community garden, and Dean Street, where the Chinese food is halal. Brooklyn is the concentrated, unedited, twenty-first century answer to who we, as Americans, are as a people."

--*Bayoumi, Moustafa*

*from How Does it Feel to be a Problem?
Being Young and Arab in America*

Bayoumi's work follows seven young Arab-Americans (6 Muslim, 1 Christian) in Brooklyn and tries to raise awareness of both the challenges they face after 9/11 and the strengths they have as individuals.

Upcoming Events

* On **November 19th** the church will be setting up for the Christmas Sale at 6pm. All hands, backs, and brains are welcome and encouraged to help.

* On **November 21st** the Christmas Sale will begin at 9:30am. Have fun and help support the church in what has become a favorite church day and famous neighborhood event.

* On **November 29th** we begin the liturgical season of Advent with a Hanging of the Greens service.

* On **December 5th and 6th** the Children's Community Chorus of Brooklyn will perform their Holiday concerts on 7:30pm Saturday night and 4pm Sunday. Speak with Lisa Johnson to obtain tickets.

* On **December 12th** the Christmas Potluck will start at **5pm**. A sign up sheet for number

of guests and food items will be posted.

Come enjoy the fellowship, music and fun.

* On **December 13th** Rosemarie Napoli will be leading worship in her last Sunday with us as Pastoral Intern. We have been blessed to be part of her call process, which has been marked by her soulful voice, her listening ear, and her pastor's heart.

* On **December 24th** the Christmas Eve service will begin at **6pm**. If you or your children are interested in participating in the nativity play, please arrive at the church by 4:45pm for preparing costumes and for a walk-through.

Special Collections:

* The Women's Association will again be partnering with the Salvation Army to provide children with toys this holiday season. We invite you to bring new toys and/or financial contributions to the back of the sanctuary.

* Hats, gloves, scarves, and socks will be collected for our guests at the Soup Kitchen through Advent.

New developments:

* In mid-December the sanctuary will be getting a standup piano. The piano comes to us through a train of generosity starting with Jessica Corbin, who plays piano for our Chorus.

* The session committed to the installation of a chair-lift taking folks from the foyer of the church to the fellowship hall. It will be in honor of Don and due to his generosity.

Advent Hymn/Prayer:

Come, Thou long expected Jesus, born to set thy people free, from our fears and sins release us; let us find our rest in Thee. Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth Thou art; dear desire of every nation joy of every longing heart. Amen. (Charles Wesley)