



december '07
mini edition

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MERRY CHRISTMAS



BranchCreek Community Church
 100 S. Main Street
 Harleysville, Pa 19438
 215-256-0100
www.branchcreek.org

Service Times:

Saturday: 6 pm
 Sunday: 9 am, 10:30 am
 (deaf interpretation) & 12 Noon

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*You can now
 download the Rising at
www.branchcreek.org.*



Thank you...

Dear Friends & Family at BranchCreek,

Merry Christmas! We are thankful for your love and support over the years. Thank you for all you have done to partner with us in our ministry to the Thai.

We are enjoying this additional time in the US and seeing God open opportunities to serve Him and challenge people about missions. If it is God's will, we will head back to Thailand in mid 2008. You will travel with us--we appreciate you!

- SCOTT, JEN & FAMILY

Timeless was a wonderful experience for our family. Thank you all so much for the time and effort put into making such a beautiful event. Please do it again next year! Thanks.

To our church family,

Thank you for the many expressions of love, caring, and sympathy following the passing of our mother, grandmother, and great grandmother. It is wonderful to feel the support of our friends during this time.

Rhoda, Lyle, Ron, Brian,
 Melissa, Braeden, Brynlee,
 & Brenna Kauffman

**RECEIVERS
 ARE BORN!**

**GIVERS
 ARE MADE!**



BY CHUCK FABER

Let me re-create the scene.

Wide-eyed and all giggles, the children run into the room, moving directly toward a pile of gifts. As in fast forward, paper, ribbon, boxes, bags, and scotch tape fragments fly in the air as new toys, just seconds before sequestered beneath beautiful wrapping paper, are revealed.

Within minutes, a once beautiful pile of packages even Martha Stewart would admire is reduced to rubble. The treasures, now removed, are put into action by smiling and congenial children.

“Whew”

you sit back exhausted. Deprived of sleep because at least one of those items, now getting its test run from one of the kiddies, required assembly. Assembly not so simple, using the directions printed in six known languages (not sure how many children worldwide are receiving the “Rough-em Bust-em Robot Warrior Play Station”, with over 250 movable parts. You glare at your watch, “2.7 minutes”, you think. “A new record for undressing hours of wrapping, taping, and bow making”.

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GIVERS ARE MADE!

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As you survey the paper scraps, you ask yourself the same question every year, “Is this the true meaning of Christmas? Is this really good for the kids? Am I doing the right thing as a parent, chasing down the latest and most in-demand toys and items for my child’s delight? Where is Christ and the Holy Birth in all of this?”

Welcome to one of the greatest of all parenting challenges. How to keep the holiday sacred yet filled with memories that will last a lifetime.

Not speaking as an expert, (Lord only knows Joanne and I struggle with this one even with children now 37, 35, and 28), but as a parent who has asked questions about balance, I think I can offer a few pieces of well-worn advice on this issue.

1 The greatest gift your child wants from you this Christmas is **YOU!** The truth is that no piece of plastic will produce joy and gratitude over the long haul. Your love, affection, time, and devotion, however, will not only last a lifetime but will provide daily joy and excitement for even the most demanding child. This Christmas, give your children **YOU!**

2 The second greatest gift your child wants this Christmas is **ENJOYMENT!** Next to needing a personal relationship with God, your children need to know that you **ENJOY** them! Parenting is not simply a duty, it is a privilege. If children are a gift from God, then do my children feel as though I regard them as gifts, or responsibilities? How much do I really **ENJOY** them?

3 The third greatest gift your child needs this Christmas is a **GIVING SPIRIT!** If it is more honoring to God for us to give than to receive, how do we use Christmas as an opportunity to teach this? Our daughter Sarah in Austin, Texas, has been working since July, using spare minutes, to create something she plans to give her mom this Christmas. I know the heart of this young woman. She thought every minute working on it, how much her mom will love it. That is a **GIVING SPIRIT!**

4 The fourth greatest gift your child needs this Christmas is to **ENLARGE THEIR CIRCLE!** A needy neighbor, the local fire company, Adopt a Child, Christmas Shoebox, or a visit to a nursing home. This Christmas, **ENLARGE THEIR CIRCLE** and allow your children to experience the joy of giving to those in need. It will make each gift they receive feel so much more special and wonderful. Are you willing to **ENLARGE THEIR CIRCLE?**

So as the shreds of gift wrapping swirl around you, consider these four thoughts and make sure your Christmas is more about the sacred than about stuff. Eternity will be affected by the change in your approach. **So will YOU.**

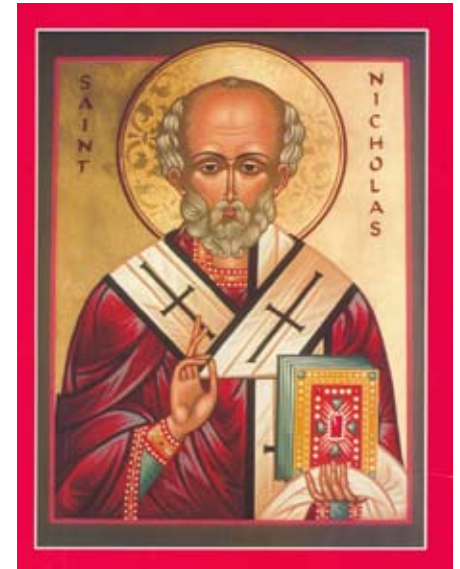
Ole Saint Nick: the Man, the Myth, the Legend

The Man:

Saint Nicholas is the primary inspiration for the lovable and grandfatherly giver of Christmas gifts. He was a fourth-century Christian bishop in the city of Myra in Lycia, a province in modern-day Turkey. Although involved in the normal affairs of the Church, Nicholas was famous for his generous gifts to the poor in his area. In one instance he is said to have presented three daughters of a dear Christian man with dowries to keep his daughters out of prostitution. He is the patron saint of several towns around the world, including both Amsterdam and Moscow.

The Myth:

Because of the spread of Christianity and its veneration of saints over the centuries, Saint Nicholas became well known in many parts of the world. Over time, his fame for giving gifts began merging with local myths, which accounts for why celebration of Santa Claus (also known as Saint Nicholas, Father Christmas, and Kris Kringle) looks so different in different



parts of the world. In many areas, the main day to receive gifts is December 6, since that is the feast day of Saint Nicholas in the Catholic Church.

The Legend:

In North America, it was the blend of the legend of Saint Nicholas with Germanic myth about the god Odin (Woden) that produced our modern views of Santa Claus. Before the Christianization of the Germanic lands, their folk stories told of Odin, who would have a great hunt each year during the winter season of Yule. Children would place their boots, filled with carrots, sugar or straw, near the chimney for Odin’s flying horse, Sleipnir, to eat. Odin would then reward those children for their

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Bakers on Broad

503 E Broad Street
 Souderton
 215-703-0518
www.bakersonbroad.com
 (currently cash or check only)
 \$2 – 5 per loaf

Tues-Fri: 7am – 6pm
 Saturday: 8am – 5pm
 Sunday: 9am – 2pm
 Monday: Closed

SOUDERTON IS A LONG WAY FROM PARIS.

Raphael de Bussy began baking in the School of the Chamber of Commerce in Paris when he was 15. Today, he and his wife Linda own and operate Bakers on Broad.

Raphael brings hand-made, artisan baked goods to our tables. Everything he sells is made by him from natural ingredients: scones, croissants, pies and tarts. And bread. Did I mention the bread?

All of Raphael's bread is made from unbleached, un-bromated flour. No oils or fats. No dough conditioners or preservatives. Thick, chewy crusts – bread in the best European tradition.

One of my personal favorites is the Country Grain: a whole-grain mixture including wheat, spelt, flax and triticale gives the loaf an open, grainy texture. The other is the Whole Wheat: a sourdough loaf with a tight small-hole texture that is solid but not heavy with a dark, chewy crust dusted with wheat bran.

Of course, Raphael makes great baguettes, epis (a baguette cut to resemble a head of wheat) and French rolls and loaves. His German rye is a treat: dense and solid, with rich rye flavor, plain or laced with caraway. You've got to try his olive rolls; he rolls out the dough and then spreads olive oil, pitted green olive pieces and a shake of red pepper flakes before rolling them up again.

**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED
 3 ACORNS**



Country Grain



Whole Wheat

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The Gadget Lady

BY JOANNE LANDIS



Although I work in front of a computer all day, I am not one of those who has every electronic gadget that comes along. In fact, I barely have any! I don't have a laptop, digital camera, pager, BlackBerry, GPS, iPod, or even a cell phone. The screens on those little things are too small, and the hours needed to learn, program, and operate such high-tech toys do not seem warranted to me. No, gadgets that get my interest are the simple ones found in my kitchen.

Not that I have many electrical gadgets there either — no bread machine, rice steamer, or food dehydrator. (Although I do have my grandmother's vintage 1984 food processor, which sits unused on a shelf because I haven't read the instruction book yet.) In this age of technology, my favorite gadgets are the handy, economical, manual ones that make my daily cooking life easier. Things like an orange plastic "jar pop" that easily pops the seal on vacuum-sealed jars (no need for hubby to muscle it open) and a nifty, miniature stainless strainer that fits exactly within a tuna can's opening so that I can drain off the water.

But my all-time favorite is the handy Ergo Safety



LidLifter — an ergonomic, hand held can opener. You think I'm kidding, right?

I stumbled across a magazine ad for this new toy literally the same week that our electric opener ground up its last can. The Ergo's shape and color attracted me first, and the statements that it "leaves no sharp edges" and "you never have to touch the lid" piqued my interest enough to visit the store's Web site and check it out. I actually bought the lime green one (pictured), but it also comes in red and blue. Made by Kuhn Rikon, a Swiss company, these ingenious gems cost about \$16 each plus shipping. I can't remember which Web site I bought mine from, but if you do a Google search for Ergo Safety LidLifter, you can buy one from your choice of sites.

Believe it or not, this simple gadget is not one of those things you can intuitively figure out without reading the instructions, as my husband quickly found out! A friend of ours also tried to open a can with one while his wife was away, and it ended up thrown out the kitchen window into the backyard. (His wife promptly made him go find it when she got home later.)

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The Gadget Lady

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I was surprised that I actually needed the instructions to make it work the first time, and had to refer to them a couple more times before its use became second nature. Now, I just love the thing! No struggling to crank it like the old handheld opener we have as a backup, and no magnet to get rusty or encrusted with food. In fact, this opener never touches the food inside your can. It actually cuts the entire top off the can, and has little clamping teeth on one side to grab and remove the top once it's cut.

Just like the ad stated, I never have to touch the lid!

Go ahead and laugh at my simplistic pleasure if you want, I don't mind. The Ergo's instructions are easy to follow, my learning curve was minor, there's no need for batteries or cables, there are no tiny screens to squint at, it saves precious energy (no electricity used), and it keeps my finger muscles in shape. Who could want more from a gadget?

RATING: 4 STARS! (FIFTH STAR WITHHELD DUE TO ACTUALLY NEEDING INSTRUCTIONS.)

A Taste of France

>>>> continued from page 6

There's ciabatta, sourdough asiago (a hard Italian cheese whose flavor is reminiscent of sharp Cheddar and Parmesan) baguettes and a spelt loaf (spelt is an ancient grain which dates back to the bronze age).

Not all breads are available every day, so check the web site for the schedule.

The store space is open and bright, with windows on three sides. Raphael and Linda furnish the space with lots of wood which accentuates the warmth the room exudes from the fragrance of baking. There are four stools and a counter by the front window and a table on



Baguette and Epi

the side. This is an ideal place to lounge over a cup of coffee or tea and a Danish, croissant or scone.

Now, this is what "think globally, eat locally" is all about.

— DEAN MACINSKAS

Reviews & Comments

We are looking for honest reviewers. People to review shopping malls, new gadgets, the latest trends, music, books, movies & fashion. Previous writing experience not necessary! Send in a sample review to rising@branchcreek.org for consideration.

Small Groups Photo Contest Winners

Lots of topics to choose from! Here are just a few!

How to Talk to God, New Testament Study: Acts, How to Read Your Bible for all It's Worth, Lose It for Life: The Total Solution for Permanent Weight Loss, Raising Responsible Children: God's Heart for Parenting

New small groups starting in January!

1st Place



2nd Place!

Ken & Suzy Yorgey, Dave & Veronica Sambrick, Jeff & Robin Tate, James & Lisa Cobb (and kids)

3rd Place!



Sally Bishop, Jill Kershaw, Wendy Campo, Alissa Messina, Michelle Fulginiti, Martha Herold, Jane Lindsay, Karen Moyer, Debbie Kemm, Vanessa Fermin, Pam Destefano, Tamara Dewane, Christine Mast



Charles & Charlotte Mandrachia, Deborah & Eric Smith, Steve & Kathy Weber, Scott Rudolph, Sally Bonner, Paul Zaffo, Will Sylianteng, Kristin Sunderman, Laurie Pinkham, Kevin & Liz Diehl, Keith Rehm, Mark & Jennifer Smith, Craig & Sally Bishop

Ole Saint Nick

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kindness by replacing Sleipnir's food with gifts or candy. This practice survived in Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands after the adoption of Christianity and became associated with Saint Nicholas.

The image of Santa Claus was furthered by Charles Dickens' depiction of the Ghost of Christmas Present in his classic A Christmas Carol. But it was Haddon Sundblom's depiction of him for Coca-Cola's Christmas advertising that truly helped to solidify his image in America. Even though Coca-Cola was not the first to do this, its massive campaign was one of the main reasons why Santa Claus is now depicted as wearing only red and white today, in contrast to the variety of colors he was seen in prior to the campaign. Also, his image as benevolent was reinforced with its association with organizations such as the Salvation Army.

What Jews Believe...

BY WENDY MASCINSKAS



At Branchcreek Community Church we believe that Jesus' command of loving our neighbor starts with understanding their beliefs. Join us each month as we explore different religions and belief systems.

about God - One God who is eternal. There is none besides Him.

about people - Created in the image of God and inherently good.

about sin - The 613 laws found in the Torah (first five books of the Bible) should be observed to the best of a person's ability given the times and circumstances of his/her life. There is also the oral law (tradition) that must be followed. Many of these oral laws are recorded and discussed in the books of the Talmud.

about repentance - There is one day for general repentance for sins intentional and unintentional. That day is Yom Kippur or the Day of Atonement. It is appropriate to be on good terms with everyone at all times so one should ask for forgiveness whenever someone is hurt.

about salvation - The ideas about what this means varies from group to group. For most Jews, this is a nebulous concept. For some very observant Jews, it means returning to the Edenic state (Garden of Eden). Others believe that they will ultimately study the scriptures with God, and all things will be made clear then.

about Messiah - Some believe a real person will be born and fulfill the Law so completely that he will be declared Messiah. Others believe Messiah will be a great political deliverer who will usher in an age of total world peace. Many believe

in a Messianic age, not a person, where people evolve to the point that there will never be any conflicts again. So for many Jews, Messiah is only a symbol.

about Israel - Most care about Israel simply because it is their homeland. However, there are great differences on whether one should "return" there or support what Israel does politically or otherwise. Many are pacifists.

THE 4 MAIN TYPES OF JUDAISM TODAY:

Orthodox - Very observant Jews who keep kosher and perform as many of the laws as is humanly possible in our time in history.

Reform - Felt it was impossible for Jews to follow many of the laws, so they become irrelevant. More concerned with preserving their ethnic identity, but most serious Reformed Jews celebrate the major Biblical feasts and observe the moral laws of the Bible.

Conservative - They tend to be more observant of the kosher eating laws and ritual laws. They see themselves as a bridge between the Orthodox and Reformed.

Reconstruction - Their beliefs are similar to Reform Jews. They are interested in preserving their ethnic identity, but it is up to each congregational community to determine what this means.



Kid-Friendly Stained Glass Cookie Recipe

INGREDIENTS:

1/2 cup Margarine, Softened
1/2 cup Sugar
1/2 cup Honey
1 Egg
1 teaspoon Vanilla extract

3 cups All-purpose flour
1 teaspoon Baking Powder
1/2 teaspoon Baking soda
1/2 teaspoon Salt
5 packages LIFE SAVERS Fancy Fruits

DIRECTIONS:

In large bowl with electric mixer at medium speed, beat margarine, sugar, honey, egg and vanilla extract until thoroughly blended. Blend in flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Cover; chill at least 2 hours.

On lightly floured surface, roll out dough to 1/4" thickness. Cut dough with cookie cutters into desired shapes. Trace smaller version of cookie shape on dough leaving a 1/2" to 3/4" border of

dough. Cut out and remove dough from center of cookies. Place cookie outlines on baking sheets lined with foil.

Crush each color of candy separately between two layers of waxed paper with mallet. Spoon crushed candy inside centers of cookies.

Bake at 350°F for 6-8 minutes or until candy is melted and cookie is lightly browned. Cool cookies completely before removing from foil.

Christmas Eve Services

3:00pm

4:30pm

6:00pm

11:00pm

Who will you invite? Come and celebrate the Christmas Season with us here at BranchCreek. See page 12 for additional details.

TIMELESS

A FAMILY CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION

By: Luanne Trehern

Did you follow the Wisemen with their camel to BranchCreek last weekend? No, your eyes were not deceiving you if you saw a camel when you drove down Main Street last Friday night! Lots of people from our community joined us to find out what was happening!



Beautiful luminaries lit the way from the drive right to the front door. The smell of fresh baked cookies, coffee and hot cider greeted all who entered. Families, some complete with great grandparents, had photographs taken in the picturesque

“White Christmas” setting with sleigh in our lobby. They enjoyed the live nativity with “baaing” sheep in the courtyard, sang along with Dicken’s carolers and made several ornaments to commemorate the evening. Our children shone like the brightest of stars as the Grinch play was quite a hit!

Timeless - A BranchCreek Family Christmas was a huge success! December 7 and 8 we had over 1100 people participate in a Christmas experience full of fun and excitement!

Christmas Eve Outreach

Monday, December 24
3 pm 4:30 pm 6 pm
Candlelight service 11pm

Who are you inviting to share in God’s love this Christmas?

The most highly attended services of the year are BranchCreek Christmas Eve Services.



This year we’re providing even more options for you to invite your friends. Pastor Craig will be speaking on, “Time for Christmas” at 3, 4:30 and 6pm. These services will include a family-friendly celebration and wonderful Christmas music. Childcare will be provided for birth through Kindergarten. At 11pm (our new late night service) our Encounter team will offer Candlelight Communion and a teaching by Dave Detwiler entitled “What the Other Mary Knew.”

Please stop by the lobby to pick up materials to invite your friends, family and neighbors, or send an e-vite at www.branchcreek.org to invite others to the greatest story ever told!