



Advent Ablaze

Celebrating
31 Years
of Warm
Welcomes!

An ELCA Congregation in the Heart of the Monadnock Region ■ Late Summer 2014 Issue



Hand-formed patties grilled to order and homemade fruit pies almost sold out at the May Fair, while attendees browsed for local crafts and used books.

Advent's First May Fair & Book Sale a Success Despite Cool Temperatures and a Few Showers

Despite weather that was definitely not fair, Advent's first May Fair & Book Sale on 31 May succeeded in raising almost \$800 for the church's general operating fund. The two most profitable categories were the chuck wagon and the book sale.

Chris Sementa, Carmen Madrid, and John Soper served up juicy burgers with homemade guacamole, green chile, or sautéed mushrooms. The fruit pies Chris stayed up the previous night baking almost sold out (the rest were enjoyed during the coffee fellowship hour after church the next day).

Modern fiction and children's books were the big sellers at the book sale, which filled half the narthex. And organizer Robyn McCarthy says that about a third of the rare items – including some valuable science-fiction titles displayed in special cases – were sold.

The need to cover their displays from

occasional chilly rainclouds that darkened the blue skies did not dampen the enthusiasm of the half dozen vendors who tried out this first-time Advent event. One even told us, "I like doing church events because the people are so nice, and this is my favorite church to come to. I used to shop at your Christmas bazaar even before I started selling at it."

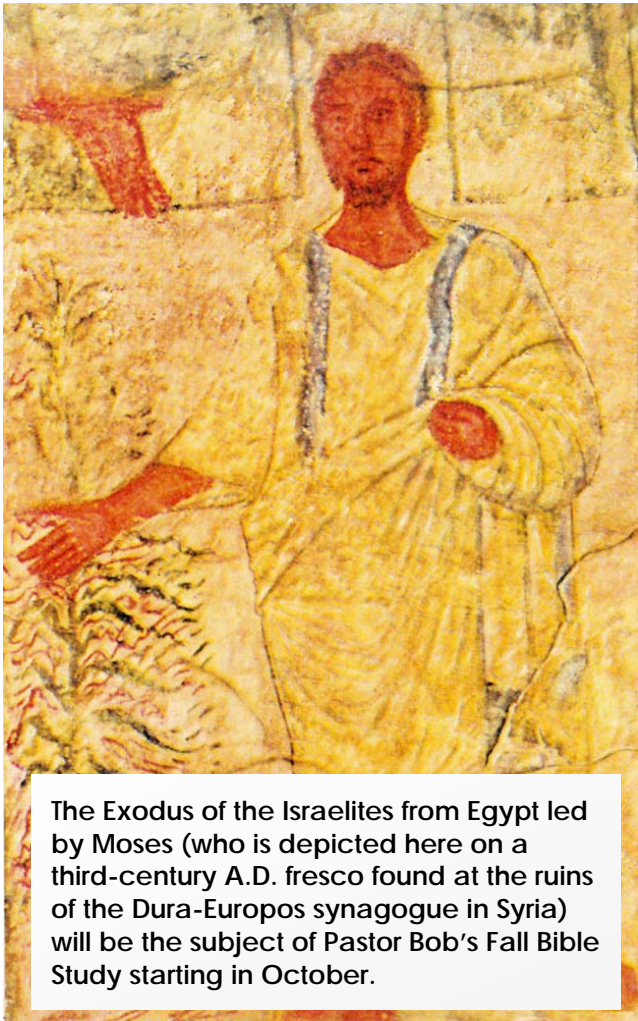
With the May Fair replacing the Really Big Yard Sale, Advent's used-items fundraiser was scaled down to several tables. Organizer Jeanne Carguilo ensured an easy clean-up by insisting that everyone who brought items that did not sell took them home again! A cake walk fundraiser (\$1.00 for a chance to win a homemade cake) and free three-legged races (with \$5.00 Dunkin Donuts cards for the winners) rounded out the day's activities. See the May Fair photo gallery on the church website for more photos. ■

Upcoming Events

- 7 september**
First Day of Sunday School
(9:00 – 9:50 a.m.)
Advent Outing: Kimball's in Jaffrey (immediately following the service)
- 27 september**
Fall Fest
(9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.)
- 4 october**
CROP Hunger Walk
- 13 october**
Fall Bible Study Begins: The Book of Exodus (four consecutive Mondays at 9:00 a.m.)
- 25 october**
Community Dinner – Mile-Long Buffet
(4:30 – 6:30 p.m.)

★ VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION ★

Our thanks to... **Ken Selmer** for giving generously of his time to keep the church lawn mown – not just before events, but all summer long.... **Evelyn Fogg** for giving generously of her popcorn machine to fundraise during church events.... The **Bensingers** for unfailingly signing up to do the church cleaning when that column in "the blue book" is blank.



The Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt led by Moses (who is depicted here on a third-century A.D. fresco found at the ruins of the Dura-Europos synagogue in Syria) will be the subject of Pastor Bob's Fall Bible Study starting in October.

Pastor's Corner: Time to Ask Who We Are and Where We're Headed

A new group was formed at Advent over the summer – the Growth Task Force – and you'll be hearing a lot more about its work in the coming months. Like the committee assembled to run the Above and Beyond Campaign a few years ago, the Growth Task Force is charged with accomplishing a specific task in a set amount of time. For the next 18 months, the members of this group (Chris Halvorson, Maryann Lindberg, Robyn Larson McCarthy, and Julie Sementa) will be pooling their marketing, fundraising, and business experience to set us on a path of growth once again.

Identifying *who* we are as a congregation is an important first step in determining *where* we are headed. And by now, you've probably been asked by one of the task force members to share your story: Why you came to Advent in the first place, and why you stay.

Advent has a history of reinventing itself, especially when the church finds itself with its back against a wall. Through hard work, faith, and God's grace, this small country church has made it through the tough times, every time.

Whatever the final strategy recommended by this group, it will be up to all of us to help, with the gifts we each bring to the Advent table, to see that the strategy is implemented. Please join me in keeping the Growth Task Force in your prayers as they begin their work. ■

– Pastor Bob



God's Work. Our Hands Sunday
Coming 7 September 2014

**Watch for the Advent
Kids doing their share!**

More info at ELCA.org

What God Did on His Summer Vacation

Oh, wait, God doesn't take a vacation. Which is why it has always struck me as odd that church-goers often rank attending summer services right alongside visiting a farmer's market or going to the beach.

I remember as a child never missing Sunday mass even though I was on summer vacation from Catholic school. On family road trips, no matter where we were, I recall my parents looking for a church on Sunday morning so we could attend before setting out. Somewhere along the line, things changed. Are the poor no longer with us between Memorial Day and Labor Day? Is there no work to be done in His name during the longest days of the year? Is remembering the Sabbath just as easily done on your favorite hiking trail as under the familiar steeple?

For many years, my church was on my bicycle on Sunday mornings, riding the hills of the Santa Monica Mountains and along the beaches of Southern California. So I'm hardly one to talk. But now that I've found my way back through the doors of a traditional church, I wonder why we take summer attendance so casually – and why it's actually expected that we do. I understand that many of us must take our annual vacations when the kiddies are out of school. And that sometimes, things just come up. But our church budget actually accounts for lower summer attendance because "that's just the way things are." As does whoever is brewing coffee those Sunday mornings.

Church Notes

The Advent Church Council recently decided to schedule **smaller-scale congregational events** throughout the year rather than one annual church picnic. The first such event – Advent's outing to Kimball's in Jaffrey – is on Sunday 7 September immediately following the service.

October's community dinner will be an **autumn-themed "mile-long buffet."** The format has worked so well on repeated occasions in the spring – it's popular with diners and it's the easiest of Advent's community dinners to coordinate – that the council decided to adopt the format for the fall dinner, too. Now all we need is a coordinator.... Speak with a council member if you can help!

Have you shared your story yet? The **Growth Task Force** has been conducting informal interviews with members and regular attendees before and after

This is not an Advent phenomenon. Since moving here, I've met Christians of other denominations who attend their churches religiously during the school year but admittedly "take the summer off." Perhaps it is a Northern New England phenomenon. When the seasons run together as in my native Southern



California, there's not such an urgency to immerse one's self in every moment of summer's warmth.

When we have a large need, we expect God and our church family to be there – and the good news is, they still are. Because, lucky for us, He doesn't hang out a sign in June that reads, "Thanks for a great season! See you in September!"

Thoughts or ideas on this subject? I invite you to share them with me. ■

– Carmen Madrid, Council President

church recently, asking, "What brought you through Advent's doors in the first place, and why do you stay?" They are trying to gather as many stories as possible by mid-September, so if you haven't been approached yet, grab one of the task force members (see the Pastor's Corner column on the previous page) at church one of the next few weekends. Your input is valuable as this group prepares the church's future growth strategy.

Enjoy teaching but can't make a year-long commitment to Sunday School? The education committee is looking for **volunteers to teach** Advent's kids on a substitute basis to give the regular teachers some occasional time off. You need only commit to one or two (consecutive) weeks during the 2014-2015 academic year, and the lesson plans and materials will be provided in advance. Speak with JeanMarie Rodriguez, education committee chair, or one of the regular teachers to learn more about this opportunity to help our young people grow in Christ. ■



Fall Fest



Saturday 27 September 2014

Celebrate Autumn at Advent!

Grilled Sausages and Homemade Pie! ~ Local Vendors
Old-Fashioned Sack Races ~ Pumpkin Painting & Other Free Kids' Activities
And featuring... The ADVENT BOOK SALE
~ with books from 25-cent paperbacks to signed rare editions ~

9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Mark Your Calendar & Stop By to Show Your Support!

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