



## Home Connection December 2009

### Peace

#### Chalice Lightings:

Welcome, blest season of peace, that bringest a truce to strife!  
And may thy white wings of peace spread over the waiting earth.  
Link all people and all nations in the sure bonds of community, shed peace and good will, good will and peace, on all humanity.

-- Percival Chubb

May peace come to your house and your home. May peace come to you and to those who love you. May Christmas bring you peace! Peace deep down in the heart of you; peace in the midst of you as you gather around the table.

-- Author unknown

To face the world's coldness,  
    a chalice of warmth.  
To face the world's terrors,  
    a chalice of courage.  
To face the world's turmoil,  
    a chalice of peace.  
May its glow fill our spirits, our hearts, and our lives.

-- Lindsay Bates

May unity and peace abide within us.  
May wholeness and joy touch our hearts.  
May kindness and compassion fill our universe  
    and reverence fill our days.  
May we see the light that shines in all.

-- Gary Kowalski

#### Story:

#### The Birth of Jesus

*Luke 2: 1-20*

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup>This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup>All went to their own towns to be registered. <sup>4</sup>Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of

David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David.<sup>5</sup> He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.<sup>6</sup> While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child.<sup>7</sup> And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

<sup>8</sup> In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.<sup>9</sup> Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.<sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people:<sup>11</sup> to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah,\* the Lord.<sup>12</sup> This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.’<sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host,\* praising God and saying,<sup>14</sup> ‘Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!’\*

<sup>15</sup> When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.’<sup>16</sup> So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.<sup>17</sup> When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child;<sup>18</sup> and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them.<sup>19</sup> But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.<sup>20</sup> The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

### *Matthew 2:1-11*

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men\* from the East came to Jerusalem,<sup>2</sup> asking, ‘Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising,\* and have come to pay him homage.’<sup>3</sup> When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him;<sup>4</sup> and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah\* was to be born.<sup>5</sup> They told him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

<sup>6</sup>“And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd\* my people Israel.”’

<sup>7</sup> Then Herod secretly called for the wise men\* and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared.<sup>8</sup> Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, ‘Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.’<sup>9</sup> When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising,\* until it stopped over the place where the child was.<sup>10</sup> When they saw that the star had stopped,\* they were overwhelmed with joy.<sup>11</sup> On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

### **Story Version:**

Once, long ago, there was a couple named Mary and Joseph. They lived in the town of Nazareth in a place called Galilee. Mary was going to have a baby. The couple was busy making plans for the baby’s birth.

Then news came that changed all their plans. The king, Herod, wanted to know how many people lived in his country. He ordered all the people to return to their home towns to be counted. Mary and Joseph had to travel to Bethlehem. The journey was hard for Mary because the baby was about to be born.

When they finally arrived, they found the town crowded with many other people who had also come to be counted. All the rooms in the Inns were full. There seemed to be no place for Mary and Joseph to spend the night. Eventually Joseph found a small barn and prepared a place for Mary to sleep.

That night the baby was born. Mary wrapped him in cloths and placed him in the manger that had been filled with sweet smelling straw for the donkeys and oxen to eat. They named the child Jesus.

That same night shepherds were watching their sheep in the fields. Suddenly an angel appeared above them. The shepherds were surprised and frightened. "Do not be afraid," said the Angel, "I have good news for you. A special child has been born tonight. Go to Bethlehem and you will find him wrapped in warm cloth and lying in a manger."

Suddenly many more angels appeared. They sang "Glory to God. May all people be kind to each other and may there be peace."

The shepherds were so excited! They weren't sure what to do. Should they stay and watch their flock? Should they go to Bethlehem? How could they find a baby among so many people? Finally one of the shepherds said "This must be a very special baby if the angels came to tell us about him. Hurry, let's go and find the child."

The shepherds searched through Bethlehem. At last they found Mary, Joseph and the baby. Jesus was sleeping in his bed of straw just as the angels had said. When the shepherds saw the baby Jesus they were filled with joy.

In a land far away, three wise men were looking for the baby too. They had seen a bright, new star in the East. When they saw the star they knew that someone special had been born. The wise men left their faraway lands and began searching for the baby. Each night they looked into the sky to see if the star was still there. They asked people they met where they could find the special child who had been born. But, no one could tell them.

One night the star shone brighter than ever. They knew they must be very near. They followed the star to the place where Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus were. When they saw the child, the wise men knelt before him and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

### **Story Questions:**

- What is the most important part of the story to you, and why?
- Our religious journeys follow many paths. For some of us, this story forms a part of our current beliefs, for others of us it is a story out of our pasts. There are some of us for whom this story has never been a part of our faith. What meaning does the Christmas story hold for you today?
- Where do you find peace in this story?
- What lessons does the story teach you about how to live your life?

## **Possible Activities:**

- Explore the story of the Birth of Jesus through the eyes of each of the characters. What did they see? How might it have changed their life?  
You can share this aloud with others, or you can write these stories out.
- Sit quietly while listening to some traditional holiday music. Pay attention to the emotions that the music stirs in you. Is there any that helps you feel peaceful? If so, consider playing that music whenever the stresses of the holidays seem to overwhelm you.
- Advent, the season leading up to Christmas, is a time for inner reflection. Take some time each day to sit quietly and reflect upon your life and activities. Consider how you might make space for more peace in your life.
- The holiday season is often a busy, hectic time for people. Plan time each day to focus less on things that need to be done and more on relationships with family and friends.
- Attend one of the Christmas Eve services. Family Vespers are held at 5:30 PM and the Candlelight Service will be held at 8:00 PM. Allow yourself to feel the joy, peace and fellowship of the season.

## **Resources:**

### **Books for Children:**

A Little Peace, by Barbara Kerley, National Geographic Children's Books, 2007

Simply Wonderful Christmas: A Literary Advent Calendar; Rettich, Schlueter, Schulz, Lembcke, et al; NorthSouth, 2006

Christmas in the Barn, Margaret Wise Brown, HarperCollins, 2007

A New Day/Un Nuevo Dia: The Timeless Story of the Nativity/El Cuento Clasico de la Navidad, Don Bolognese, Horse Drawn Books, bilingual edition, 2004

Come and See: A Christmas Story, by Monica Mayer, Scholastic, Inc., 1999

## Resources for Adults:

Explore the following readings in Singing the Living Tradition published by the Unitarian Universalist Association. (Our hymnal)

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| # 429 by William F. Schulz           | #602 by Lao-tse                    |
| #462 by Paul Robeson                 | #615 by Howard Thurman             |
| #540 by Rabindranath Tagor           | #616 by Sophia Lyon Fahs           |
| #574, from the Hebrew Scriptures:    | #617 from the Christian Scriptures |
| #577 by Mahandas K. Gandhi           | # 618 by Dorothy Sölle             |
| #578 by Olympia Brown                | #619 by W. Frederick Wooden        |
| #589 by Pupils of the Lincoln School | #620 by Edna St. Vincent Millay    |
| #597 from the Dhammapada             | #621 by Margaret Gooding           |
| #598 Buddhist                        | #681 adapted from Gaelic Runes     |

Peace Prayers: Meditations, Affirmations, Invocations, Poems, and Prayers for Peace, edited by the staff of Harper San Francisco Carrie Leadingham, Joann E. Moschetta, and Hilary M. Vartanian, Harper San Francisco, 1992

Peace is in Every Step: the Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life, Thich Nhat Hanh, Random House, 1995

Being Peace, Thich Nhat Hanh, Parallax Press, 2005

Amazing Peace: A Christmas Poem, Maya Angelou, Schwartz & Wade, 2008

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus: Experiencing the Peace and Promise of Christmas, edited by Nancy Guthrie, Crossway Books, 2008

Cultivating Inner Peace: Exploring the Psychology, Wisdom and Poetry of Ghandi, Thoreau, the Buddha, and Others, Paul R. Fleischman, Pariyatti Publishing, 2004

Watch for the Light: Readings for Advent and Christmas; Bonhoeffer, Donne, Eckhart, Eliot, Hopkins, Lewis, Merton, Romero, Nouwen, Yancey, et al; Orbis Books, 2004