

## HILLTOP CHURCH JANUARY ANNOUNCEMENTS

January 2014

Hilltop family, in the absence of an Administrative Assistant we will not be providing a Hilltop Echoes Newsletter for January. However, with this announcement page we hope to keep you informed of what's coming up in the life of the church. Thank you for your patience.

**PASTOR ON VACATION** starting Dec. 25th. He will be back in the office on Jan. 2, 2014. If you have a pastoral need during this time, please contact Lay Leader Paulette Adams (507-351-0523) or Pastor-on-Call Donn Rakow (507-920-9941).

**JANUARY MISSION POTLUCK** will be on Sunday, January 12 after the 10:15 service and will benefit Horizon Home dedicated to creating unique, individual, mental health treatments moving persons towards independence and self-sufficiency.

**OFFERING ENVELOPES** - Your 2014 Offering envelopes are in. You can pick up yours at the Welcome Center. Thank you for your patience.

**MARY/MARTHA CIRCLE:** Our women's circle meets in the New Year on Wednesday, January 8th at 1:30pm. Hostess: Wanda Allevan / Devotions: Phyllis Cole / Project: Health Kits

**LEADERSHIP RETREAT** - Save the date! All elected 2014 Leadership are encouraged to join us on Saturday, January 11th, from 9am to 1pm at Belgrade Ave UMC (to get a fresh perspective). We will spend time reflecting on where we have been, where we are, and where God is calling us. This meeting sets the tone for our work throughout the year - your voice means a lot to us!

**GAME DAY** will be held again this year in the Fellowship Hall on January 19th from 1 to 4 p.m. Please bring a snack to share, coffee and water will be provided. Please use sign up sheet at the Welcome Center in the narthex to sign up for the cribbage tournament in the 500 tournament. Games will be available for kids and adults of all ages.

**JESUS FOOD:** Remember how fun and rewarding it is to pack food for Kids Against Hunger? Well, an offshoot of KAH is Jesus Food and they're coming to Hilltop on Saturday, February 8, 2014. We will package the food HERE from 9-11am, and are asking for an optional donation of \$10 per person to help offset the cost of the food and its shipping. Please join us: the more, the merrier!

**ARE YOU READY TO MEET JESUS?** We would like to invite you to meet Jesus in a fresh way by attending the Walk To Emmaus. This 72 hour experience is filled with learning, inspiration, discussion, prayer, food and fellowship. Its purpose is to challenge and equip persons to bring living Christian faith to their homes, churches, and places of work. If you desire religion as usual, or to remain unchanged than this is not for you. Come experience the outpouring of grace and love and be built up in Christ! The men's walk is April 24-27, and the women's walk is May 1-4 both at the beautiful Koronis Ministries near Paynesville, MN. Hilltop has alumni ready to sponsor you. Contact Don Putzier to be aligned with a sponsor today 507 237 8393.

## **January Birthdays**

Lucas Peterson	01/01
Micaylia Kraywinkel	01/02
Caden Clark	01/03
Christine Wilson-Winter	01/08
Penny Johnson	01/09
Matt Rausch	01/10
Tara Swalve	01/11
Kelly Rivers	01/12
Mary Gaskins	01/12
Adam Brown	01/14
Don Bohn	01/14
Debby Westby	01/15
Gary Cooper	01/15
Lois Reese	01/18
Peter Jarnstrom	01/18
Chuck Rowen	01/20
Derrick Galinat	01/23
Betty Goebel	01/25
Dennis Thorsen	01/25
Dianne Mell	01/25
Collin Parish	01/26
Logan Swalve	01/26
Brandon Page	01/28
Neil Westby	01/29
JJ Morgan	01/30
Del Goebel	01/31

## **January Anniversaries**

Bill & Adela Scherer	01/01
Judy & John Harrington	01/04
Andrew & Mary Bittner	01/05
James & Kathleen Mehrman	01/22
Jill & Jeff Klaseus	01/25
Bob & Char Kraywinkel	01/26

## **Hilltop Calendar link**

<http://www.mankatohilltop.com/calendar/>

## **The Christmas tree**

*and the gifts under the revolution tree*

I'll confess - I don't have much Christmas spirit, yet. Ukraine is embroiled in a revolution. We go to bed at night praying that during the night our government's special police forces won't attack unarmed, peaceful protesters. We stand in freezing rain and blustering snow and sing together the songs of the nation.

After the attack on Bloody Saturday, the authorities scrambled to find a justification for the violence - the official reason given was that the city workers needed to erect the Christmas tree. They built the frame before the protesters re-took Independence Square - a famous Ukrainian singer responded, "why would we want a Christmas tree sitting in a pool of our own blood?". The protesters have covered the frame in flags, posters, and a giant portrait of political prisoner and former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko. This is what a Christmas tree should look like.

The President of Ukraine, amid a chorus of calls for his resignation, gave an ominous promise to do all in his power to bring peace to Ukraine. Later in the evening he ordered the special police forces to attack protesters. He has since signed underhanded deals with Russia that the people oppose.

At times it feels as though things might get much worse here before they get better. It doesn't feel like Christmas, but maybe that is because my understanding of Christmas is sugarcoated and gift-wrapped. We tell the Christmas story with winter wonderland backgrounds, eggnog in our glasses, and a warm fire roaring behind us. The true story of the birth of Jesus is set in the Pax Romana.

The Peace of Rome - as the propaganda machine labeled it. This sounds wonderful, but the Pax Romana was peace by the sword. The Roman people didn't consider peace as the absence of war - peace was when all the enemies had been vanquished or beaten down to the point that they had no more will to fight. For the Jewish minority living under the despised Roman rulers, the Pax Romana was not celebrated. They had no more will to fight. The Prince of Peace was promised. This wasn't a continuation of the peace they knew, the Prince of Peace would bring a new and lasting peace.

I was a teenager when Pastor Bob told us that being a peacemaker doesn't mean being a pushover. To create peace we must do so much more than run from danger - we must stand up against those who harm others. Peace by the sword is not peace. For Christians, peace is not the absence of war. Peace is the presence of Christ.

In my little home in Lviv, I sit safely by my Christmas tree. I am profoundly proud of my friends who are camping out under the revolution tree each night. They are demanding a better future, they are pushing for peace. They are refusing apathy and embracing self-determination. They are risking their safety in order to search out a more peace-filled country.

It's beautiful to celebrate Christmas in the shadow of a revolution. What is Christmas if not a celebration of the greatest revolution ever? Christians dismantled the Pax Romana by showing what true peace it. There are so many unknowns, but even amid the chaos and confusion the Prince of Peace continues to fill our hearts with the peace that passes all understanding.

Please continue to keep us in your prayers. For Ukraine and for our students. For safety and peace. This Christmas, may you experience the Prince of Peace in a new and profound way. In the midst of pain and trial, may you be reminded of them one who brings true and lasting peace.

Love,

Michael Airgood

(Michael serves as GBGM Missionary to Lviv, Ukraine in the ministry planted by Fred and Stacy)