



# The Messenger

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December 2009

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**THE MISSION OF NORTH BRANCH REFORMED CHURCH**  
*is to invite all people into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ  
that results in a continuing worship of God and  
daily service in the Holy Spirit's presence.*

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**January 2010 Messenger Deadline: December 28<sup>th</sup> + Bulletin Deadline: Each week by Thursday Noon**

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The *Message from the Pastor* for December comes from the RCA Missionaries in Croatia.

## Croatia Update

### **Wind Still Blows in Former Communist World**

*By Rev. Eric J. Titus*

I was in Berlin in 1983 when the wall was still standing firm and tall, and there was little hope that that immovable obstacle to freedom would ever be toppled. Now, I am looking back 20 years to when I was 26 and sat spellbound and wonderstruck at the images coming through the television of that wall coming down.

Among the images that stand out from that momentous time is the music video of "Wind of Change," by the Scorpions, played over and over on MTV back when it was still dedicated to actually playing music videos. To see it, you can go to the following link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=taVW8Kv2HcQ>. It was played across Europe constantly, Croatia included, during this euphoric period of the fall of the Iron Curtain.

Part of the lyrics are: "Take me to the magic of the moment/ On a glory night/ Where the children of tomorrow dream away/ In the wind of change."

Those children of tomorrow are now 20 years older, and I am sure that the hopes and dreams of many became dusty disappointments in the wake of the fall of communism. What could compare with that? This dream of many was shared with the entire world. But then came the hard reality of recovery and the work of reconciliation in the wake of the triumph of long resistance. Today this reconciliation and coming to terms with all that happened in "the dark corners" for 40 years still goes on.

The Scorpions sang hopefully: "Walking down the street/ Distant memories/ Are buried in the past forever." But a good deal of the difficulty with the "children of tomorrow" is that memories aren't really buried in the past forever. They are buried at the surface, and for

many they still cause deep pain.

I read in the Nov. 11 *Prague Post* that the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes continues to delve into the "dark past." The July 15 issue reported that a furor was caused in Prague by Stanislav Penc (a former dissident) who posted on the internet the names of those who had served or cooperated with the *Státní bezpečnost* (Secret Police) under communism.

Many want justice; others think it is better to bury memories in the past. It is an issue that is not easy and is fraught with complexities at many levels. The children of tomorrow have shared their dream, but the reality is many are still dealing with the nightmares of yesterday.

Croatia was a part of all this wind of change. Its situation became all the more difficult as war came on the heels of the great fall. The dream had hardly time to seed before the children of tomorrow became casualties and fatalities of war. The wind of change, as the Scorpions said it, "blows straight into the face of time."

While the rest of the communist world moved forward, the war placed the former countries of Yugoslavia farther away from the wind of change and much of their shining moment was lost to this tragedy. The wind of change blows in Croatia, and even in our small city of Osijek things are always being done to better realize the promise of that magic moment of 20 years ago. But often disappointment and disillusionment threaten the dream.

Still the Croatian children of tomorrow do dream. They struggle to rebuild, to reconcile, to make sure the "magic of that moment" is nurtured and is able to grow and flourish, to make sure that the future matches the dream of that moment.

To be sure there are still walls that must come down. This is a universal truth. We are honored that we have been able to walk along side some of those children of tomorrow as they come to terms with that magic moment 20 years ago that still reaches in complex ways into today and the foreseeable future.

Eric and Nancy Titus are RCA missionaries in Osijek, Croatia, where they work at the Evangelical Theological Seminary and with the Reformed Christian Church in Croatia. They have three children: Samuel, 15, Valerie, 11, and Penny, 9.

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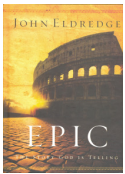
## Adult Education

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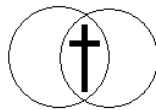
**ADULT EDUCATION:** Did you read the current bestseller THE SHACK? Or, are you wondering what all the fuss is about? Come join us at 9:15 in the Upper Room on **December 6<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>** to discuss the Biblical concepts in this book and their application to the author's life and our own. There will be a 3 minute review of the plot to get everyone up to speed, but the emphasis of the course is to discuss the challenging presentation of an encounter with the Trinity, and God's viewpoint on guilt, anger, love, forgiveness, free will, and personal relationship among the Trinity and with us as humans. The second week will include video clips of an interview with the author. There will be NO CLASS on December 20<sup>th</sup> and December 27<sup>th</sup>.

**PASSIONATE SPIRITUALITY 2010:** In January and February 2010, we will be studying ***Epic: The Story God is Telling*** by John Eldredge. "A retelling of the Gospel in four acts." Revisit the drama of life. View God not only as the author but also as the lead actor. Explore God's motives and His heart. Discover the meaningful role we are all called to play.



**MONTHLY NOON BIBLE STUDY:** Meets on the second Tuesday of each month. The next meeting will be on Tuesday, **December 8<sup>th</sup>**, and will focus on the Book of John.

**SMALL GROUPS:** Interested in being part of a circle of care with Christ in the center? Join a small group. Most of our groups meet monthly and function as either a Bible Study, task group, or support group. For more information contact Pastor Todd in the church office.



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## Christian Action

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**PETER MAYER STARS AND PROMISES BENEFIT CONCERT:** The Christian Action Committee in conjunction with Middle Earth and United Reformed Church is sponsoring a benefit concert by the Peter Mayer Group on Friday, **December 11<sup>th</sup>** at 7:30 PM at United Reformed Church in Somerville. Proceeds will be split by all three organizations with NBRC's going to missions. Tickets are \$25 and can be purchased in Fellowship Hall between services or by contacting Doris in the office (908-725-2313).

**CHRISTMAS TOY COLLECTION:** The Christian Action Committee 4 Seasons of Giving is once again collecting toys for the children of inmates through the chaplaincy at the Somerset County jail. Unwrapped toys may be left in the 4 Seasons of Giving box in fellowship hall. Toiletries for the inmates would also be welcome. Items must be in the box by **December 15<sup>th</sup>**. Please consider this request as you shop for Christmas. Contact Larry Forni on 908 391-6987 if you have questions.

**MISSION OFFERING:** We collect a mission offering on the first Sunday of each month. Mission Offering envelopes are at the beginning of each month in the offering envelope packages. Additional envelopes will be placed in the pew racks.



**FROZEN FOOD TRAYS:** Christian Action reminds everyone to use the frozen food trays found in fellowship hall for leftovers. These meals are distributed to those in need in the area. The trays are easy to use and you can leave them in the freezers in the kitchen at your convenience. Please help with this valuable mission of the church.

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## Christian Care

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**JANUS BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP:** The purpose of this group is to offer education and support in an attempt to build friendship and understanding among people suffering from loss and aid them in coping with their losses. This group meets the second Tuesday of each month at 7:30 PM at The Centre at Raritan, 1124 Highway 202S-A2, Raritan, NJ 08869. The next meeting will be Tuesday, **December 8<sup>th</sup>**. For more information please contact Barbara Ronca. M.S.W., L.C.S.W., Counseling and Therapy Services at 908-218-9062.



**CHRISTIAN CARE SERVICES: Blood Pressure Check:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of every month in Fellowship Hall at 10:00 AM. **Medical Equipment:** Judy Wilkinson, 908-218-1575. **Prayer Concerns:** Kathy Herrman, 908-231-1917. **Small Chore Services for the Elderly:** Louise Manning, 908-722-3834 or call any of the deacons listed in the bulletin. **Transportation Needs:** Alice Swan, 908-722-5308. **DVDs and Audio Cassettes of worship services for shut-ins:** Fred Swan, 908-722-5308. For further information regarding Christian Care and its services, please call Louise Manning 908-722-3834 or Nancy Vollers 908-725-7656.

**PLEASE NOTIFY** us when you or a member of your family is admitted to a hospital. This knowledge will be useful for visitation and prayers. You may contact

the church office, 908-725-2313, Pastor Todd, 908-725-2313, or Louise Manning, 908-722-3834.

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## Christian Education

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**ADVENT CELEBRATION:** Christian Education Committee invites you to come join us for our Advent Celebration. The Advent dinner will be held on Sunday, **December 6<sup>th</sup>** from 5:00 - 7:00 PM. A concert will follow dinner & dessert. Please sign up in Fellowship Hall to bring a main dish or side dish. NBRC is a nut free facility. Please do not use nuts in your recipes.



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## Fellowship

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**ANNUAL ADULT CHRISTMAS PARTY** = Fun, Food, and Fellowship. Fellowship Committee welcomes all adults to the home of Susan and Tony Chapman, 11 Farrington Lane, Branchburg, on **December 19<sup>th</sup>** at 7:30 pm. Sign-up is in Fellowship Hall. Please bring either an appetizer, dessert, or bottle of wine to share. We'll have lots of laughs with a progressive grab bag too. Please bring a non-generic gift between \$5-\$10. Call Susan with questions or for directions at 908-722-8327. Bring a friend!



**PAPER GOODS WANTED:** Do you have any paper goods from a past party or event just lying around your home, not being used? If so, we'd love to have them. We're collecting unopened packages of napkins, cups, and plates in their original plastic wrapping. They will be used at future fellowship coffee times. What a great way to recycle! Please place them in the box in the kitchen marked "paper goods".

**CALLING ALL COFFEE HOSTS** from the past 5 years! Fellowship Committee Chair Nancy Fiedler is compiling a list of the names of people who have hosted coffee. (See list hanging in Fellowship Hall) She would like to compose a rotating list of those who would like to serve in the future, which, depending on the number of people, could mean you would host only once every 2 or 3 years. Please put a checkmark in the "Yes" or "No" column by your name if you would like to be a part of this rotating list. If you are not presently on the list, and would like to serve in the future, please add your name to the list and a checkmark in the "Yes" column. Thank you for your continued assistance with this very special Sunday morning ministry.



**FELLOWSHIP HOUR HOSTS** are needed for December. You only need to prepare beverages (coffee, tea and juice), which are supplied by the Fellowship

Committee. There is no need to supply baked goods. Contact Nancy Fielder (908-704-9578).

**FELLOWSHIP SIGNUP:** If your committee will be hosting Fellowship Hour, please make sure that you have added your committee to the signup sheet in Fellowship Hall *including a contact name and telephone number.*

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## Finance

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**2009 OFFERING UPDATE THROUGH OCTOBER:** The 2009 budget for the North Branch Reformed Church totals \$542,857. To fund this budget we need to receive \$506,307 in pledges and offerings. The balance of \$36,550 is projected to be covered by other income such as the special offerings, interest, and donations for facilities use. Based on historical giving patterns, the percentage of \$506,307 which is needed each month to meet that goal has been calculated.



Needed offering year-to-date	\$402,068
Actual offering year-to-date	<u>387,189</u>
Difference	\$ 14,879

Please note that we are running behind. ***If you have fallen behind in your pledge, it would be appreciated if you were to take this opportunity to bring your commitment up to date.*** If you have any questions about these numbers, please ask any member of the Finance Committee.

**HAVE YOU REMEMBERED THE CHURCH IN YOUR WILL?:** Get a brochure from church on our new endowment fund.

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## Kirkside

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**INTERIOR DECORATOR WANTED!** Do you have any talents in Interior Decorating? Kirkside is looking for you! We are embarking on a house redecorating project and are seeking a volunteer to bring fresh ideas to our historic home for Seniors. Please call Barbara O'Rourke at 908-526-8115 if you can help.

**VACANCY:** Do you know anyone interested in living in a shared house for seniors? There is a vacancy for one resident, male or female, age 62 or older, for a second-floor room at Kirkside. Please contact Barbara O'Rourke at 908-526-8115 for further information.



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## Men's Ministries

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**ECUMENICAL BREAKFAST:** The next MEN'S BREAKFAST is the Ecumenical Christmas Steak & Egger in the Parish Center at St. Bernard RC Church on Saturday, **December 12<sup>th</sup>**, from 7:30 to 9:00 AM. Enjoy good food and good friends. Please contact Wes Frueh (908-526-1859) or Pastor Todd (908-725-2313 to RSVP or for more information.



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### Prayer Needs

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**REMEMBER IN PRAYER:** Evelyn Fisher, Bruce Hartzog, Marie Hunter (daughter-in-law of Marilyn Hunter), Marilyn Hunter, Pete Indrisek, Mary Knapp, Henry Larsen, Jim McKelvey, Eva Jane Mosko, Cathy Pfauth, Harold Polhemus.

**PRAYERS FOR OUR SERVICEMEN:** Michael Campbell (nephew of Janet Kolb), Tom Cantilina, Adam Clark (in Iraq), Jim Crosley (husband of Jennifer (Munzenmaier) Crosley), Nichole Haas (niece of Ron & Lori Taylor), Greg Hall (nephew of Pat Cahill, in Iraq), Rob McCracken (husband of Meg (Yarnell) McCracken), Colin O'Rourke, Marc Reinecker (cousin of Rick Smith, in Iraq).

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### Preschool

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**TRANSPORTATION NEEDED!!!** A Preschool student needs assistance with transportation to and from Preschool. The family lives in North Branch, just 5 minutes from the church, and does not have a car. On Thursday, the student would need to be transported to NBRC at 8:45 AM and back home at 11:20 AM. If you can help, contact Nancy Vollers (908-725-7656) or the church office (908-725-2313).

**2009-2010 PRESCHOOL REGISTRATION:** Did you know the Preschool offers a 5% discount to church members, and we give you priority in the registration process? Registration is currently open. Check the Preschool website at [www.nbrc.com](http://www.nbrc.com) for classes and tuition rates.



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### Sympathies

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**OUR SYMPATHY** to Ray Martin and family on the death of his wife Teri Martin, who passed away on **November 1<sup>st</sup>**.



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### Women's Ministry

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**WOMEN'S CHRISTMAS BREAKFAST:** Women's Ministry invites all women to our annual Christmas breakfast at the home of Charlotte Pluymers, on Saturday, **December 12<sup>th</sup>**, 9:30 to 11:30 AM, where we will celebrate Christmas with breakfast and devotions. If you are willing to bring something or if you are in need of transportation, please contact Laurel Ennis at 908-722-1018. We look forward to seeing everyone.



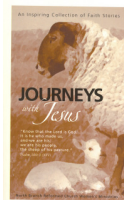
**CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS FOR THE SANCTUARY:** Christmas Poinsettias provide seasonal beauty to the decoration of the Sanctuary during the Christmas services. If you would like to contribute to this year's decoration, please fill out an order form (*pink*) found on the front railing or the table behind the last pew in the Sanctuary. Please return the form to the box marked "Poinsettias" in the church office no later than **December 14<sup>th</sup>**. Plants will be available for pick up after the service on **December 27<sup>th</sup>**.



**WOMEN'S MINISTRY MONTHLY MEETING** will be held on Tuesday, **December 8<sup>th</sup>** at 7:30 PM at the home of Laurel Ennis, 24 Roanoke Road, Bridgewater. Come celebrate the season with refreshments and a gift exchange--bring your "tackiest" gift for a fun time of sharing.

**CHANCEL FLOWERS:** If you would like to provide the Sunday flower arrangement in memory of someone or just would like to provide an arrangement, there is a sign-up sheet for this purpose in Fellowship Hall. See Fred Yarnell, 908-722-4759, for details.

**JOURNEY WITH JESUS:** Read almost 100 personal stories of faith from North Branch Church members. The book is only \$12.00. North Branch Women's Ministries will donate all proceeds from the sale of "Journeys with Jesus" to local missions. To obtain a copy, contact Pam Frueh at 908-526-1829.



**BLOW-OUT SHIRT SALE:** ALL SHIRTS \$5!!! *Pink T-Shirt, Blue Golf Shirt and Denim Shirt are available.* Two logos--"Let Us Encourage One Another" and "Be Still." All proceeds go to our local missions. For further information, please call the office at 908-725-2313.



## Worship

**FAMILIES FOR ADVENT WREATH LIGHTING:** If your family would like to light the Advent Candles and read an appropriate litany on any of the Advent Sundays, or at one of the three Christmas Eve services, please sign up in Fellowship Hall. Scripture readers are also needed for the Christmas Eve Services.



**SUNDAY MORNING PRAYER GROUP** meets in the Upper Room on Sunday mornings at 8:45 AM before the worship services to pray for the ongoing ministry of NBRC. Anyone wishing to join is welcome!!!

## Youth

**NURSERY CARE:** Childcare is available for children ages 0 to 3 years during both worship services on Sunday. Our nursery is a cheerful, warm and inviting space staffed by loving volunteers. For information or questions, please contact Natsuko Buurstra, 908-252-3727.

**HOW DOES JESUS WANT HIS CHURCH TO BE HIS HANDS AND FEET TO THOSE LOOKING FOR WORK?** During this time of high unemployment, we will publicize information for those seeking jobs in the Messenger, bulletin and, if requested, our website. Jobseekers should email the office (office@NBRC.com) the information listed below (with your name which, of course, will not be publicized), and we are asking job holders to be reading, praying and sending helpful information to the same office email.

Type of Job Sought	Title of Last Job Held	Short Description of the Industry	Years Experience in that Industry
Transportation/Logistics Management	International Air Manager	Responsible for air exports and imports at both EWR & JFK airports.	20+
Supervisor (warehouse, inventory control, dispensing, manufacturing.)	Warehouse Manager GMP compliant warehouse	Pharma/Biotech	10
Program/Project/Product Manager	Coordinator of Product Management - Marketing	Wireless Telecommunications	8+
Customer Service/ Administrative/ Clerical		Wireless Telecommunications	20+
Executive/Administrative Assistant	Executive Assistant	Exec. Assistant to President of a division marketing company. Made travel arrangements, presentation materials, managed calendar, planned meetings, client dinners, and client visits. Also did some expense tracking	22 years at company, 13 as Exec. Assistant
Software Quality Assurance Analyst or Manager	Software Quality Assurance Analyst	Responsible for testing product and <i>assuring</i> that a quality product is delivered within a promised timeframe.	Over 22 years in Information Technology
Software Configuration Management, Software Release Management, and Defect Tracking Management	Software Quality Assurance Analyst	<i>Manage the software configuration management process</i> of versioning objects, code, and documentation. <i>Manage Defect Tracking process</i> and promotion of change requests from developer to tester to client. <i>Monitor and report to senior management the progress of defects and customer issues from receipt to release.</i>	Over 22 years in Information Technology
Procedural / Systems Analyst /Technical Writer	Software Quality Assurance Analyst	Soup to nuts "full project lifecycle" analysis, requirements planning, design and implementation of software systems.	Over 22 years in Information Technology
Corporate Trainer	Software Quality Assurance Analyst	Train client or in-house staff pertaining to procedures, methods, or the "how to" of using a software product.	Over 22 years in Information Technology



**STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION  
AND OFFICE HOURS**

**Telephone:** 908-725-2313  
**Fax:** 908-725-5682  
**Email:** Office@NBRC.com  
**Web Page:** www.NBRC.com

**Pastor Todd Buurstra**

Pastor of Worship and Witness  
**E-mail:** Buurstra@NBRC.com  
8:30 AM to 5:00 PM - Monday thru Thursday  
Evening hours & meetings by appointment

**Pastor Mark E. Swart**

Pastor of Discipleship  
**E-mail:** Swart@NBRC.com  
8:30 AM to 5:00 PM - Mon, Tues, Thurs and Friday  
Evening hours & meetings by appointment

**Brian Katona**

Music Director  
E-mail: briankatona@gmail.com or  
Music@NBRC.com  
Monday - 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM  
Tuesday & Thursday - 9:30 AM to 12:00 PM  
Wednesday & Friday - 2:00 to 5:00 PM

**Doris Munzenmaier**

Office Administrator  
**E-mail:** Office@NBRC.com  
8:30 AM to 5:00 PM - Monday thru Friday  
Office periodically closed at lunchtime.

**Jennifer Landrieu**

Preschool Director - 908-725-2326  
**E-mail:** Preschool@NBRC.com

**Barbara O'Rourke**  
Kirkside Administrator  
**E-mail:** Kirkside@NBRC.com

**CONSISTORY**

**Officers:** President Pastor Todd Buurstra, Co-Vice  
President Pastor Mark E. Swart, Clerk Jane  
Yarnell, Treasurer Doris Munzenmaier  
**Elders:** Sue Betz, Tim Chamberlin, Wes Frueh, Janet  
Kolb, Diane Laich, Carlos Lugo, Carmen Lugo,  
Co-Vice President Tim Sandford  
**Deacons:** Doug Bateman, Violet Coy, Larry Fox, Linda  
Mayerik, Ruthann Pauli, Chair Keith Strege

**Committees and Chairperson(s):**

**Adult Education** (sub of Christian Ed) - Sue McGeown  
**Audio Visual** (sub of Worship) - Bruce Taggart  
**Building & Grounds** - Dennis McGale, Keith Strege  
**Cemetery** - Jim Housten  
**Chancel** (sub of Women's Ministry) - Fred Yarnell  
**Christian Action** - Lynn Ritter Cargill  
**Christian Care** - Louise Manning, Nancy Vollers  
**Christian Education** - Donna Taggart  
**Church Planting** - Mary Beth Iodice  
**Ecumenical Relations** - Bruce McConnell  
**Fellowship** - Nancy Fiedler  
**Finance** - Wendy Kroon  
**Hope House Maintenance** (sub of B&G) - Marty Herrman  
**Kirkside** (sub of Christian Action) - Kathy Rue  
**Memorial Gifts** - Janet Kolb  
**Men's Ministry** - Wes Frueh  
**Music** - Patti Harmer  
**Pastor/Staff Relations** - Paul Soskey  
**Preschool Board** - Larry Fox  
**Women's Ministry** - Laurel Ennis  
**Worship** - Carrie Dilgard

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**WORSHIP SERVICES FOR DECEMBER**

**EVERY SUNDAY**

(except December 27<sup>th</sup>)

9:15 AM - Contemporary Worship Service  
9:15 AM - Adult Education  
9:30 AM - Church School  
10:15 AM - Fellowship Time  
10:45 AM - Traditional Blended Worship Service

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**SUNDAY, December 6, 2009**

(Communion Sunday)

**Second Sunday in Advent**

Pastor Todd Buurstra will preach.

**SUNDAY, December 13, 2009**

**Third Sunday in Advent**

Pastor Todd Buurstra will preach.

**SUNDAY, 20, 2009**

**Fourth Sunday in Advent**

**Carol Choir Musical**

**Thursday, December 24, 2009**

**Christmas Eve**

Pastor Todd Buurstra will preach.

**6:00 PM - Children's Service**

**8:00 PM - Candlelight Service**

**11:00 PM - Candlelight Service  
with Communion**

**SUNDAY, December 27, 2009**

**First Sunday after Christmas**

Pastor Mark Swart will preach.

**9:30 AM**