



# ON THE STREET

## The Peoples Church of Chicago Newsletter for December, 2009

*"A Spiritual Home for People of Conscience"*

### CALENDAR

#### Film/Movie Night –

- ? **Fri, Dec 18, 6pm: "A Christmas Story"** – Jean Shepherd's funny and touching story of a boy's quest for a bb gun for Christmas.

#### Upcoming Services

- ? **Sundays 10am:** Worship Service, with stories and poetry and music.
- ? **Sun, Dec 20, 10am:** Our annual **Christmas Pageant**, with carols & readings; everyone plays a role.
- ? **Sun, Dec 27, 10am:** We observe **Kwanzaa**, followed by Potluck & the Sacred Conversation on Race.

#### Other Events

- ? **First Friday, Dec 4, 6pm: Taizé service** – in Molly's Café, followed at 7pm by **Coffeehouse**, with "Cole & Campbell," coffee, cake!
- ? **Sat, Dec 12, 7pm, Piano Recital:** Joseph Bures plays two Beethoven sonatas and a tour-de-force version of "By the Beautiful Blue Danube."
- ? **"First" Fri, Jan 8, 6pm: Taizé service**, followed by **folk music sing** –bring your favorite songs, instruments.

#### 2 Li'l Fishes

Each Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday, a free lunch is served in Anderson Hall. All are welcome.

If you would like to help, phone Will Pruitt, volunteer coordinator, 773-754-6102.

#### Minister's Notes:

#### Season of Darkness – and Lights

*Rev. Jean Siegfried Darling*

I love snow. It takes a lot of the gloom out of those gray November skies, and it changes the sound of the outdoors, as a friend mentioned to me yesterday – that first blanket of snow muffles sounds – there's a quietness that makes us listen with new ears.

I hope you can see the beauty in it in your neighborhood, too – the snow lining every tree limb and branch, every phone and electric wire, every garage roof and porch railing.

Of course, it also reminds me of the people who don't have a warm place to call their own, and who have to find ways to endure and survive cold weather. One morning recently on my way in to work, I sat in my corner of the el train smiling, for no good reason – the heater on this car was in good working order! and I just felt happy. I passed a CTA worker, bundled up, yawning as he waited for the train to pass, and when our eyes met, he nodded to me. And then I passed an almost empty platform, where a tallish, youngish man sat on the floor of the heated platform shelter with a large plastic bag of stuff – his clothes, probably. He had on coat and hat, and a muffler wrapped multiple times around his neck. I imagine he was homeless, and staying warm the best way he knew how. Our eyes met, and we smiled at one another.

It is these moments that help me understand the possibilities of connection, across gulfs of race, and class, and situation.

I'm glad to hear that a new place for homeless veterans has opened on Chicago's South side – vets make up a disproportionate number of homeless people. It's a transitional housing site, with 32 beds – where people have a room with a closet, not just a pad on the floor.

Chicago has a ten year Plan To End Homelessness that is scheduled to end by 2012. Most homeless services providers are facing the reality that the city is just not doing what it will take for this remarkable idea to come true. The city underestimates the number of people who need a place to stay, by not counting people who are doubled up, for example.

*cont'd...*

### **Minister's Notes, cont'd**

But the idea is a good one – instead of warehousing homeless people, giving them a pad and a meal or two, the plan is intended to put people into permanent housing, into situations where they can get the assistance they need, if they have problems with mental health or substance abuse or any of the other things that contribute to homelessness.

One plan designed to do that is called Street to Home, in which outreach workers find homeless people on the street and bring them into their own apartments. It's working in New York City and other cities, and there's a rumor of it getting started here in Chicago.

There's simply a shortage of affordable housing here, as so many single-room-occupancy hotels across the city have closed, and so many inexpensive apartments have been converted to condos in the past few years. And Chicago has been slow to get behind this issue with real money. One study found that between 2003 and 2008 Chicago spent just over \$10 per capita on the plan, while New York City spent \$153 and even LA spent over \$40.<sup>1</sup>

One proposal to help rectify this would allocate 20% of all city money raised from TIF districts to building affordable housing. TIFs are Tax Increment Financing districts, a model Mayor Daley is fond of for redeveloping "blighted" areas (in actuality, redevelopment is not always so focused). The "Sweet Home Chicago" coalition is backing this plan, and it would be a good time to call your alderman and ask them to support it.

During this time of economic distress, I hope more can be done for people who need help *right now*. People are now losing their homes because they've lost their jobs, not just because of the housing bubble bursting. There is much less emergency housing available now than there was only five years ago.

'Tis the season to be generous!

Let us not only give to help people eat, stay warm, and have a place to lay their heads this Christmas Day, but act to call our leaders to account, and really end homelessness.

peace, *Jean*

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<sup>1</sup> Marian Wang, "Investigation: Housing the Homeless," *Chicago Reporter*, July 1, 2009

### **On-line Giving**

As treasurer and long time member of Peoples Church, I want to thank you for your continued financial support. Thanks to your contributions we have been able to expand our programs. Good things are happening.



Many people prefer to use their credit card to make donations. We have recently made this possible through a secure web organization JustGive. When you visit our website, [www.PeoplesChurchChicago.org](http://www.PeoplesChurchChicago.org), and click on "Support Us," you will find an explanation of the program. All funds must go through the Preston Bradley Center since it is the 501(c)(3) arm of Peoples Church.

Click on "Donate Now" to go to JustGive. You must register and then you will be able to donate to the Preston Bradley Center, and specify in a comment if you want your gift to benefit general operations of the church, the 2 Li'l Fishes lunch program, or the building itself.

I hope you have a blessed holiday season. We appreciate your support and hope to see you in church.

Virginia Tolk



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# *Calendar – December 2009*

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4 Molly's Café: 6pm Taizé svc  7pm Coffeehouse: "Cole & Campbell" folk music	5
6 10am Service 11:30 PC Trustees	7	8	9	10	11	12  7pm Joseph Bures classical piano
13 10am Service	14	15	16	17	18 Molly's Café: 6pm – Film Night "A Christmas Story"	19  HOLIDAY DINNER In Anderson Hall
20 10am Service Christmas Pageant	21	22	23	24	25  CHRISTMAS DINNER In Anderson Hall	26
27 10am Service KWANZAA celebration	28	29	30	31		