



# ON THE STREET

## The Peoples Church of Chicago

### Newsletter for December, 2007

*"Uptown's Spiritual Home for People of Conscience"*

#### CALENDAR

#### Song and Hymn Sing –

- ? Every Thursday, 5:30 – 6:30pm.  
**No meeting on Dec 27.**

#### Upcoming Services

- ? Sunday, Dec 2: 10am. Advent:  
"A Dream of **Peace**"
- ? Sunday, Dec 9: 10am. Advent:  
"**Justice**": Ex. Dir. Jamiko Rose  
speaks about the mission of ONE.
- ? Sunday, Dec 16: 10am. Advent:  
Lots of Christmas songs, lots of  
**joy**. Service followed by **potluck**.
- ? Sunday, Dec 23: 10am. Advent:  
"**Love**": Annual **Christmas**  
**Pageant** – everyone is on stage!
- ? Sunday, December 30: 10am.  
Celebrate **Kwanzaa** with story and  
song.

*All services followed by light refreshments.*

#### Other Gatherings

- ? Sunday, December 9: 11:15 am.  
**Board meeting**. All are welcome.

#### 2 Li'l Fishes

Each Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, a free lunch is served in the lower floor Anderson Hall of the church. All are welcome.

If you would like to volunteer, come by after 10:00am, and Isaac will put you to work.

#### Minister's Notes:

#### Advent: Waiting with Hope

*Rev. Jean Siegfried Darling*

As I look out this morning at the snow swirling and floating in the winter scene outside, I'm grateful for a warm place to live and work! I'm grateful that our church can provide a warm place for people to drop in, in this kind of weather.

Advent in the Christian year is an anticipation, a joyful waiting. Over the years it's been translated into waiting for the excitement of Christmas gifts, and sometimes we forget the real meaning of the season. In the liberal church, we aren't waiting for gifts, nor for a literal Second Coming, so what are we waiting for?

Sunday, we read together:

*We are waiting. We are waiting for love to be born.*

*We are waiting with hope for peace to arrive.*

*We are waiting for a rebirth of justice and joy in the human heart.*

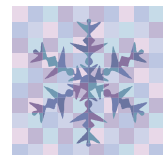
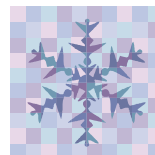
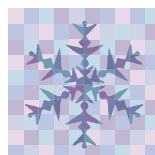
*We are waiting, but we are not only waiting, for while we wait, we work.*

*We work to make love and hope and peace and justice and joy everyday realities in our lives, and in the lives of all people everywhere.*

We work to create – right now – the kind of world we want to live in. If there isn't enough tolerance, can we practice acceptance? If there isn't enough justice, can we ensure at least that our own actions are just? If there isn't enough love, can we give some?

Let's celebrate – and in dancing, feasting, singing together, we live the life Divine.

peace, *Jean*



## You Are Welcome

Grace C.A.B.P. Itter, Board of Trustees President

“You are welcome.” It is such a simple phrase and used quite often. No matter what thoughts are conjured up in your mind when you hear this phrase, a feeling of warmth is attached. That is how I perceive Peoples Church. I have many emotions and frustrations but no matter what, a feeling of warmth is attached.

I came to Peoples Church 11 years ago to the day that this newsletter is dated. I sat there and knew I belonged. I had been going to church my whole life, however, prior to that day I was never a member of any spiritual affiliation. I visited 20-30 different congregations during my search for a church home, and I liked many of them but I never felt the desire to become a member. I knew I was welcome but I didn't feel like I belonged.

When I stepped into Peoples, it was the least comfortable surroundings of any church I had entered. I walked in the 5<sup>th</sup> floor room where the services were held: it was used as a theatre as well. It didn't look anything like a church. It was dark and a little strange. However, I immediately felt God's gift of love. I felt welcome. I felt like I belonged! Billy Hand Robinson stood up and told me that he loved me. He told the whole church that he loved them, but not in the normal way. He said, “If no one has told you today that he or she loves you I want you to know that I do. I love you, I love you, I love you,” and not only did he mean it, I knew that he meant it. At that moment I realized that I had become a part of this church.

We have come a long way since December 1<sup>st</sup> 1996 and most of it has been forward. We now worship in the main floor sanctuary. It is no longer dark and it does look more like a church. But we still have that same sense of welcome. Billy Hand Robinson has passed on to a better place but his words are spoken, and love is given freely, each Sunday. But most of all God's touch is known.

Today, 11 years later, I still feel that presence. I am welcome and I try to make you feel that way too. If you haven't been here lately, stop by. You may hear a word or two that makes you contemplate. You may sing a song that lifts your heart. You may have a cup of coffee with an old friend or a new face. But no matter what you do, I know you will feel God's presence. I know you will feel welcome, because you are.

Shalom, **Grace**

## Our Once and Future Church

Rev. Bob Ford, Ex. Dir., Preston Bradley Center

In talking of Peoples Church it seems appropriate to paraphrase the title of Loren Mead's 1991 book *The Once and Future Church*, for what we are about at Peoples is setting in motion transformative, evolutionary changes in an old neighborhood community church.

Peoples Church has always been on the cusp of change. It was founded in the 1880s by Hiram W. Thomas, who brought some 80% of his congregation with him when he was ejected from the Methodist communion for heresy. Its leader of longest tenure was the renowned Preston Bradley, who took the reins in 1912, after resigning from the Presbyterian Church upon being threatened with heresy charges. Bradley in turn brought 86% of his congregation with him.

Bradley not only became an orator well-known on both sides of the Atlantic, but brought other prophetic voices to share his pulpit, notably the lawyer Clarence Darrow, who had opposed William Jennings Bryan in the famous Scopes trial. The tradition at Peoples has long been to engage forward-looking, liberal preachers who think for themselves.

That was then, and this is now. What has been, has been, and what will be is presently evolving. Since 1926, Peoples Church has occupied its own massive building in Uptown, at that time an affluent lakefront neighborhood with a promising future. But sociological conditions change. Cultural assumptions change – and along with them, politics and economics – and not always for the better. Today in Uptown, extremes of wealth and poverty vie for our attention, and Peoples is part of the service provider network caring for the homeless and other disadvantaged citizens.

**Today, Peoples Church bills itself as “Uptown's spiritual home for people of conscience.”** We are more involved with issues of hunger and housing than with issues of theology. We are more interested in easing the human misery which we see around us than in ecclesiastical niceties. And yet... and yet we are seeking to build a spiritual home for everyone as we work to improve the lives of those living in want in God's Earthly domain.

Won't you come and build the future with us?

In solidarity with the disadvantaged, **Bob**