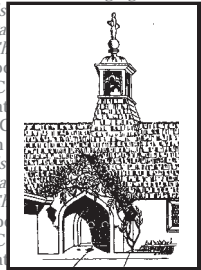




Foothills
 Congregational Church
 United Church of Christ
 December
 2009
 Bells
 Los Altos, California



Pastor's message

Waiting in wonder for the Christ Child

... but Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart. (Luke 2:19)

CAN YOU BELIEVE IT, as I sit here writing this message Christmas is just six weeks away. I have spent the past two months making plans for Advent and Christmas, designing services, coordinating music with Fred Cummins, squirreling away ideas for sermons.

You have probably been working on Christmas plans, as well. Securing tickets for family visits, making list of gifts, remembering where you left the decorations that were hastily put away last year, dieting now so you can eat later.

The stores are ready for us. Macy's had its decorations up before Halloween, and sales are already advertised, harbingers of things to come. There will be a frenetic rise in activity over the next few months, and unless we plan carefully we can get worn out with "good tidings to all."

How different it was that first Christmas. Mary was visited in the night by an angel who whispered in her ear – *You will conceive and bear a child... He will be great and called the Son of the Most High (Luke 1:31-32)*. Then she sighed and went back to sleep. Days later she went up to visit her kinswoman Elizabeth who recognized the signs of her pregnancy and rejoiced with her. And then they waited – 40 weeks – like everyone else.

And on the hillsides there were shepherds watching their sheep, mostly asleep. They were waiting, and when they heard the angel announcement they went to Bethlehem and told Mary what they had heard, and knelt

and worshipped the child in wonder. No bands. No exploding fireworks. No big organ thundering carols. No TV flickering in the backroom with Christmas movies. It was a quiet, still, still night. Mary took a deep breath and kept all these things in her heart, pondering what they meant.

If you want to capture the meaning of Christmas I encourage you to take some time to be quiet and breathe this season. Make sure there is time in your festive planning for pondering, wondering, receiving the blessing.

To that end we have a number of opportunities for you to take a break and be quiet with God. First of all we have our annual **Advent Retreat**, help this year at Still Heart Retreat Center in Woodside. This day-long retreat, 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., will deepen our awareness of the hope and wonder that is Advent and Christmas.

Then, a local man, David Maddalena, came to ask me if we could host a series of

FOOTHILLS FOOTNOTES

Foothills Congregational Church, UCC

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Deadline: 15th of each month

three **Quiet Services**. On these nights our Parish Hall will be open for silent prayer by people in our community. Members and friends of Foothills are welcome to come and take a break from the Christmas rush. The dates and times will be: Saturday, Nov. 28, 6:45-7:30 p.m.; and Fridays, Dec. 11 and 18, 6:45-7:30 p.m.

On Saturday, Dec. 12, from 5-6 p.m. we will hold a **Blue Christmas Service**, a service for all those who need a time and space to pray for and grieve for those who will not be celebrating Christmas this year because of death, illness, or distance. In order to enjoy the hope of Christmas we need to also recognize the shadows, and the rough places in our lives.

Of course, you can expect to sing an increasing number of Christmas Carols this Advent, and marvel at the **Children's Pageant** Dec. 20. **Christmas Eve Services** will be at 5 p.m. (family service), and at 7 and 11 p.m. (lessons and carols) led by the choir.

It's time to get ready.

Take a deep breath and listen. Angels are singing.

Matt Broadbent



By Yvonne Webber

Besides being Michelle's sister and the mother of three, Yvonne Webber has taught Judaics to children and youth for nearly 17 years and is in the process of getting her Masters in Jewish Studies with a focus on Jewish Education.

THE WINTER HOLIDAY season is one my children look forward to with joy. One of their favorite pastimes is to drive around and look at the beautiful Christmas lights that people use to decorate their homes.

This is an easy way for my children to feel a part of society as a whole; much easier, for example, than visiting my side of the family during the winter holidays. Although my children understand that their grandparents and extended family are not Jewish, when we celebrate Christmas with them it can be confusing. My children began to think that they were celebrating Christmas. We walk a fine line to instill in our children a strong sense of who they are spiritually so that they are prepared to live as Jews in a Christian society and face issues that arise from living in a diverse population.

As a Jew by choice, it is sometimes difficult to come to terms with the commercialism of Hanukkah. I grew up celebrating Christmas in all its *too-many-presents* glory. When I left Christmas behind, I thought I would get away from this materialism. I was sorely mistaken.

It seems that living in such a materialistic society puts pressure on everyone, and Hanukkah is no exception, largely due to its proximity to Christmas. Jewish society's eagerness to keep children happy and interested in Judaism has led to excessive gift giving. In our house, we curtail this overabundance with meaningful gifts. Our children open one present each night from a different family member.

We make sure that our children know who is responsible for the gifts of the night. Even

with this tradition in place, it is difficult for them to hold onto the religious meaning of the holiday. In order to reinforce our faith values after our children have received their Hanukkah gifts, they choose a few of their possessions to give to those less fortunate.

In a society that is inundated with the materialism of Christmas (even in the end of October, Christmas displays dominate many retail stores), we find ways to teach understanding of difference and seek ways to bridge the gap to make multi-cultural observance possible. Hanukkah is not a major holiday according to Judaism, except in America. For us, it is about spending time as a family each night of Hanukkah.

Lighting the Hanukkah candles and singing the blessings and songs helps to instill the values of tradition. Hanukkah reminds us about the great military victory over oppressors, how a small band of Jews, the Macabees, overcome adversity with the help of God. We play games to remind of us of the story and eat fried foods to remind us of the miracle of one night's oil lasting for eight nights.

When we find ourselves with my side of the family during Hanukkah, we take the opportunity to light candles each night and share our traditions. As my children grow older and are more grounded in their Jewish identity, it is nice for them to see our different traditions being celebrated side-by-side.

My family embraces our traditions as a way to learn about who we are, how we choose to live. I am the bridge between my family, Judaism, my children and my husband who grew up in a typical educated Conservative Jewish family. This understanding and acceptance of the differences in our extended family is the unexpected gift of living a reality as a multi-faith family.

Two Sisters Reflect:

The December dilemma

[Michelle]

and

Unexpected gifts of raising children of faith in a secular world

[Yvonne]

By the Rev. Michelle Webber

MARK AND I WANT our December celebrations to instill in our daughter some of the foundations of our beliefs: the value of theological pluralism, the gifts of inclusive love and joy in the Jesus story, connections to family and to God's creation, and the freedom to come to her own understanding of her relationship to spirit. We also seek to recreate magical memories we have from the December holidays of our childhoods.

We choose to celebrate both Hanukkah and Christmas. This may seem like an anomaly since my husband's family does not celebrate any other Jewish holidays, but it is the one connection to being religiously Jewish that my husband remembers from his childhood. We also continue my favorite childhood Christmas tradition of Christmas stockings. We open stockings on Christmas morning as a symbol of the unexpected gift that someone as spiritually powerful as Jesus would come to the world as a tiny baby, needing so much care.

We feel lucky to have an inter-faith family. As a child, I was allowed to explore religion, as I was inspired to do. As a youth, my husband explored Christianity and Native American religion. We want our daughter to

grow in her faith journey in whatever way is organic to her. But there is a little tension between us instilling in her our values and allowing her the room to explore her own.

For about four years, we were pretty successful at creating the type of December traditions we wanted for her. She loves Hanukkah, with the candles, eight nightly presents, and the yummy fried foods. She likes the story of the miracle of the oil and believes that God could actually do that. She likes Christmas with its big extended family celebrations and the Christmas pageant with its charming songs and costumes. And we told her that Christmas is about Jesus, not Santa Claus, who is nothing more than a nice story. And then came preschool.

One of the teachers dressed up as Santa and sat each kid on his knee to tell what they wanted for Christmas. Her response: Kitty Cat Rain Boots. Later that day she says to me, "you may not believe in Santa Claus, Mama, but I do. You'll see, on Christmas morning I will get my rain boots."

So there was my dilemma. I had to choose either to insist that Christmas is about Jesus and *not* Santa Claus or to allow her the freedom to come to her own Christmas theology, which, it seems, includes Santa Claus. Christmas morning included the rain boots and her insistence that Santa Tim is the real Santa. As a result, she and I have had lots of deep discussions about the nature of truth; what evidence to use to decide what is real and what truth can be found in stories that are not factual.

In the end, I guess, Santa has been a gift to me and my daughter, especially being in an inter-faith family. She has gotten to practice defining and defending her own belief, a skill I believe will serve her well in our morally relative world.

Beyond the Courtyard

Home-grown talent:

Kristin Burns

EVERYONE SEEMS TO KNOW and appreciate Kristin Burns, but if you are relatively new to Foothills you would never guess she's been involved in our music programs for more than 25 years! Whether she is playing the piano with sensitivity and (often) gusto for our regular worship service, or leading a children's song, Kristin brings a special spirit to our musical lives.

Jean Golden spotted Kristin's talent as a pianist when Kristin was barely out of high school, and asked her to accompany the children's singing. The two women made a wonderful team for many years, and eventually Kristin took over as leader of the children's music program. But that's not all. She also accompanies the adult choir on the piano about once a month, and directs the elementary choir, composed of children who practice together after church school during the school year.

"I started taking piano lessons when I was five and continued through my school years," Kristin says. The daughter of Linda Anderson Page and Richard Anderson, Kristin grew up on Covington Road in Los Altos, attending Carmel, Loyola, Blach Jr. High and the former Awalt High School ("we were the last class before it became Mountain View High School," Kristin says.)

As a child she loved riding her bike all over town. A favorite destination was the variety



Photo: Bob Willwerth

store at the Blossom Valley Shopping Center.

"I was a really crafty kid and they had everything — styrofoam, felt, glitter, beads — all that fun stuff," recalls Kristin.

As a teen she worked at a book store at Rancho Shopping Center and later at the Play 'N' Learn store in the Blossom Valley Center.

She attended Sunday School at Foothills and in high school was a devoted PPer. Spending a week each summer at UCC Camp Cazadero was the highlight of her teen years, first as a camper, then as a counselor.

The San Jose State Honors Humanities program came next, followed by her first full-time job at CooperVision in Mountain View. Her most fateful employment turned out to be hiring on as a "secretary II-specialist" at Stanford in 1986.

Today she is still on the same team of faculty, staff and researchers: the Mechanical Engineering Design Group.

"I started out using an NBI word processing machine to type manuscripts which included scientific equations. My responsibilities grew over time and for the past 15 years or so I've managed the group — funds, operations, personnel. . ." Kristin says. "Things have changed so much since I started. Advances in business technology have tripled the amount of work one is expected to accomplish."

She arises at 4:45 a.m. on weekdays and is in her office by 6. She works there until

Continued on page 4

. . . Kristin Burns

Continued from page 3

1 p.m., then commutes home to San Jose and takes over the care and driving of her children, Anna, 7 and Sam, 5 – to their lessons and activities. Meanwhile, husband Sean heads for work at the Four Seasons Hotel Silicon Valley, after tending the children through the morning.

How does Kristin juggle all these responsibilities? Here is her survival recipe:

- Be organized.
- If you work at home (which she does afternoons and evenings), make sure to find your “off” switch so you don’t feel guilty about spending time playing with your kids.
- Identify the things you really want to do.
- Know that you can’t do everything and that’s okay.
- Celebrate and cherish your many blessings.

Special interests for Kristin include her family photo album, which she keeps up-to-date by having her materials laid out at one end of the dining room table, ready to use whenever she has a few minutes; cooking and baking; listening to podcasts by the “Meal Makeover Moms,” two dietitians who share healthy, kid-friendly eating ideas; and listening to big band music, Nat King Cole and – even – Dean Martin (!)[the author’s exclamation point. -*Ed.*] while driving or working around the house.

“I’m always happier when I listen to them,” she laughs.

Kristin concludes, “I feel so fortunate to have had Foothills as my church home for practically my whole life. To share it now with my own children (and their grandparents!) is such a blessing.”

—*Carolyn Barnes*

Advent Event — It’s coming Nov. 29

THE ADVENT EVENT is when we make advent wreaths to take home and use to help put our holiday busy-ness in the context of the story of Jesus. It happens right after church on the 29th. [The timing of this item is borderline; it is run in the hope that you’ll receive *Footnotes* before then. The item is also duplicated on page 5, I find, but gee, surely a little extra emphasis can’t hurt. —*Ed.*]

If you have an evergreen bush or tree in your yard, please trim it and bring your trimmings to church that day. Give them to Del Fillmore. We will all share these trimmings as the greens for our wreaths. Everything else you need, including a take-home booklet, will be available at church. —*Michelle Webber*

Jail ministry for holidays

THE NEXT CHANCE to serve with the Foothills worship team at the Elmwood jail in Milpitas will be the evening of Sunday, Dec. 13. If you would like to attend, tell Rev. Evelyn Vigil or Bob Willwerth by Tuesday, Dec. 8, so we can get you cleared to enter. We generally meet in the lobby around 7:15 p.m. and start services close to 7:30 p.m.

If you’d like to be involved in more jail activities for the Christmas season, please let Evelyn know. We offer communion to all the men in the main jail before Christmas. Generally one shift goes from 8-10 a.m. and the next from 1-3 p.m. We gather before for a short communion service for the volunteers. It may be Dec. 23 or Dec. 24, as details work out.

—*E.V.*

Coming at Foothills

- Nov. 28 Quiet service with David Maddalena
Nov. 29 Advent Event
Nov. 30, Dec. 3, 7, 10 Gait & Balance Class
Dec. 5 Advent Retreat,
Still Heart Center, Woodside
Dec. 8 Christmas Tea, Closs home
Dec. 11 Quiet service with David Maddalena
Dec. 12 Blue Service
Dec. 14 Circle of Women
Dec. 18 Quiet Service with David Maddalena
Dec. 20 Christmas Pageant
Christmas Concert
Caroling Party
Dec. 24 Christmas Eve services
at 5, 7 and 11 p.m.

Christmas concert

4 p.m. Dec. 20 at church

DAVE ROSS, NANCY POWELL and Fred Cummins [that would be flute, oboe and piano, respectively. *Ed.*] will offer a free, 1-hour Christmas concert and singalong Sunday Dec. 20 at 4 p.m. in the sanctuary. Children welcome, child care provided. Bring something edible or drinkable to share afterwards. —*F.C.*

Circle of Women will meet Monday, Dec. 14, in the meeting room from 7 to 9 p.m. for a simple potluck and sharing. This will be our combined November/December meeting. If you have any questions please contact Lee Rogers at (650) 941-3925. —*L.R.*

Book Group will not meet in December. —*A.N.*

Part of the family

Please call Susana Leung, (650) 948-8430
with names for this section.

We remember in our prayers . . .

Foothills folks involved with treatment or hospitalization this last month: **B.J. Darrow**

Mike Shannon recovering at home from brain surgery

Sharon Klaisner at home

Shirley McCauley at a residential care facility in Mountain View

Doris Prosser at Manor Care, Sunnyvale-Saratoga Road

Ann and Arvin Epp, at home

Noreen Hopper at Sunny View Community Center

Mary Peabody at Lytton Gardens, Palo Alto

B.J. Darrow at Pilgrim Heaven, Los Altos

Our deepest sympathy to:

The **Pomeroy** family. **Jo Pomeroy**’s mother, Jeanne Eaton, died Oct. 29 in Santa Clara, at age 92.

The **Henderson** family, on the death of **Bill Henderson**, Nov. 12. A memorial service was held at Foothills on -Nov. 22.



Stories from Elmwood

[Bob Willwerth is a principal member of the group of Foothillers that joins the Rev. Evelyn Vigil to offer church services to inmates at the county's Elmwood Jail. These are some thoughts on his experience there.]

I'M PRETTY CONFIDENT that Rev. Evelyn Vigil would agree with me that our two main purposes in leading church services at Elmwood are 1) to help reduce the number of inmates who return to prison after their release and 2) to help make the inmates' time in prison more tolerable by fostering a Christian community for them there. Several inmates' comments on a recent Sunday evening were very encouraging in this regard. Some brief examples:

One man told me he is resolved to join his wife and children in a church-going life after he's released. He thinks his wife will be totally surprised, but he wants so much to be a good husband and father to their children, and church involvement is a good way of helping him do that.

"My wife and I met in church but then I never attended. But I've become a Christian now." Our response: "Your wife will love the new you."

Another spoke about trust and faith in other people, which was raised during the sermon. He said, "I grew up not trusting anyone - because it wasn't safe to do so. But after listening to your message I'm beginning to see that it would really be very nice - a much more enjoyable way to live."

About 50 inmates attended our service and several responded to our invitation for them to ask for prayers - usually for their families for whom they're concerned.

One man stood up and said that he origi-

nally wasn't going to say anything but then, after listening to a few others, he decided he would like to do so. After the service he came forward with several others to thank us for coming. We thanked him for speaking up in the service and wished him well.

It was clear that there was a bond among the attendees and a genuine appreciation for our bringing an hour of Christian fellowship to them. Besides, they sang the hymns with gusto! It was a worthwhile evening.

—Bob Willwerth

Gait and Balance reminder

DON'T FORGET to enroll in the upcoming holiday season class to improve your balance in sitting standing and walking. The class begins Monday Nov. 30 with two sessions a week for two weeks.

Sessions will be Monday and Thursday, Nov. 30, and Dec. 3, 7 and 10 from 9:30 to 11 a.m. The cost is \$30 for four sessions or \$10 per session. All money collected will again go to Outreach. Call Susana (650) 948-8430 or me (650) 968-0379 or sign up on the clipboard in the courtyard. Hope to see you in class!

—Ann Oliver, MS, PT; apoliver@sbcglobal.net

December Youth schedule

Sunday Dec. 6, 11:15-12:45 CSA Homeless Care Packs Meet in the MSF room to help pack Homeless Care Packages that will be distributed by CSA.

Sunday Dec. 13 Christmas project. Evening Meeting. RSVPs needed.

Sunday Dec. 13 6 p.m., All Church Caroling Party. Evening Meeting. RSVPs needed.

Sunday Dec. 27 No meeting.

Save Tuesday, Dec. 8

Christmas Tea

YOU ARE ALL INVITED to this festive Foothills favorite. This year, the tea will be at the home of Bill and Kathi Closs, 10320 West Loyola Drive, LAH. Please come at noon, and bring a plate of finger food to share, plus children's pajamas, unwrapped, or a check donation made out to the Community Services Agency.

Our always-enjoyable musical program will begin about 1 p.m. Parking could be a bit of a problem, so you might want to meet at the church and carpool. There is wheelchair access near the back entrance of the house.

—Ann Nelson



Advent Event Nov. 29

THE ADVENT EVENT is when we make advent wreaths to take home and use as a way of putting our holiday busy-ness in the context of the story of Jesus. It happens right after church on the 29th. [The timing of this item is borderline; it is run in the fond hope you'll receive *Footnotes* before then. —Ed.]

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—Michelle Weber

Ed note: I see I've done it again; this same item appears on page 4, but the emphasis can't hurt!

Truth Seekers class

TRUTH SEEKERS IS OFFERING an Advent course this year - beginning Tuesday, Dec. 2, from the Teaching Company: "Great World Religions: Judaism," taught by Dr. Isaiah M. Gafni of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

This is an appropriate course for Advent because Jesus was a Jew; his message, although universal in its appeal and application, was aimed at the Jewish population. He practiced the Jewish faith and never left it, although he did try to change some of its emphases and practices. We will know Jesus better if we understand the Jewish religion.

Throughout the course, we will study Judaism from within - as it was understood by its adherents in the past and by those who practice or identify with Judaism today.

This is a 12-lecture course, each lecture 30 minutes. It is our practice to look at one or two lectures each week.

Dr. Gafni is an award-winning teacher and scholar. He has frequently served at American universities including Harvard, Yale and Brown. The DVD is being loaned to us by Mark Leonard. We meet in the Edith Landels Meeting Room each Thursday from 11 - 12:15 p.m.

We invite anyone interested in this subject to join with us in this exciting course.

—Fay Oliver



The Library

Interesting man, interesting time

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE was a force to be reckoned with, an interesting man in an interesting time.

Born in the mid-eighteenth century, he was a contemporary and good friend of William Pitt the Younger, prime minister under George III, as well as of John Newton, former slave trader turned evangelical Christian and author of *Amazing Grace*.

Born into a wealthy merchant family from Hull, the second most important port on the east coast of England, Wilberforce stood for parliament at the age of 20 and, having won the election, was sworn in just after his 21st birthday, just barely making the legal age in time. He quickly became famous for his oratory, which he frequently used to further the causes of his good friend Pitt. When he stood again for parliament he sought the vacant seat from York, a much larger constituency, and again was successful.

London at this time was extremely decadent. Gaming clubs were rife and fortunes were gambled away on the turn of a card. Flesh pots abounded. The Church of England was as corrupt in its sale of “livelihoods” as the Church of Rome had once been in its sale of Papal indulgences. Wilberforce managed to avoid the worst of the temptations, keeping his own indulgences down to a gentle roar.

At the age of 26 he underwent a classic conversion to Christian evangelicalism. This was the most fascinating chapter to me. The conversion experience, well defined by the author and well documented by

Wilberforce’s letters, sheds a cogent light on what is essentially a mystic experience. It changed Wilberforce’s sense of purpose and he was determined not only to dedicate his personal life but his public life as well to the strictures of Christianity.

William Hague, author of *William Wilberforce: the Life of the Great Anti-Slave Trade Campaigner*, details the amazing story of Wilberforce’s fight for the abolition of slavery in England, a struggle that took 20 years. Wilberforce was influential in supporting the cause of abolition throughout Europe as well as the Americas.

—Lee Rogers

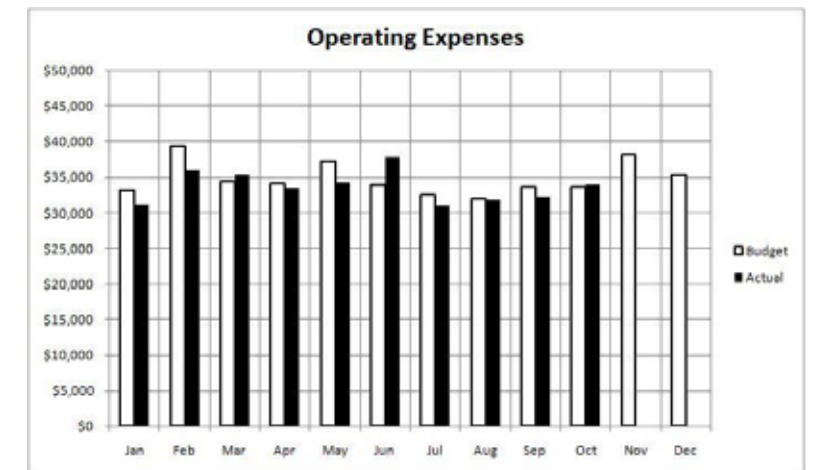
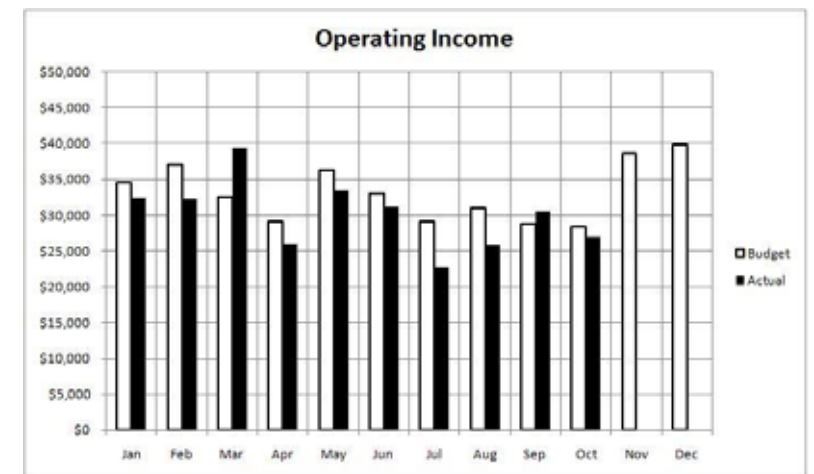
Library News

IN THIS SEASON of Thanksgiving I am particularly grateful for the wonderful book reviews written every month by Lee Rogers for the *Footnotes* bulletin and our library users. Her reviews are always articulate, enlightening and educational as well as being very readable. Many, many thanks, Lee. [The editor wholeheartedly, enthusiastically and unequivocally endorses them sentiments. —Ed.]

—Jeri Schricker
Adult Books Librarian



Financial Report



Financial results continue disappointing

THE CHARTS ABOVE PRETTY MUCH tell the story. Both operating income and operating expenses are running below budget through October. The total year-to-date operating income was \$300,986 while the total operating expenses were \$337,175. We will need approximately \$100,000 of income during November and December if we are to end the year with a balanced budget. And we can do it! Last year, income for November and December was \$100,114.

—Del Fillmore