



Iowa Religious Media Services

eNews

December 2017

Regular Business Hours

Monday-Thursday
9:00 am-4:00 pm

Office Closures

**Friday, December 22 -
Monday, January 1 -
Christmas and New Year's
observances**

**Monday, January 15 -
Civil Rights Day (Martin
Luther King, Jr. Day)**

**Tuesday, January 30 -
IRMS Annual
Meeting (office opens
at 2:00 PM)**

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Where in the World is the Executive Director

**January 23 - Disciples
Ministers Institute,
Christian Conference
Center, Newton - display**

**January 30 - IRMS Annual
Meeting and Board of**

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (but not this time....again.)

As she did during Lent this year, Executive Director Sharon Strohmaier is at home recovering from total knee replacement surgery. She had her left knee replaced on Tuesday, November 21, nine months to the day from surgery on her right knee. While her first knee was replaced in 45 minutes, this one took only 33 minutes and required just one night in the hospital. With sturdy crutches, a new walk-in shower, a good bed for sleeping much of the time and a laptop to keep up with email and IRMS work, Sharon will be spending the majority of the remaining days of 2017 on the mend at home.



While she is away, we, the staff, stand ready and willing to assist you with resources for Advent, Christmas and beyond. Looking forward, our January 2018 eNews will focus on the many Lenten resources available to your church.

In this publication we highlight just one unique resource, one that we share with churches throughout North America, Europe, parts of Asia and, for the first time this year, Africa...the **Bethlehem Peace Light**. When we share this special gift with you, you will join the thousands from around the world as a 2017 *Messenger of Peace*.

During this very special season, we join Sharon and the IRMS Board of Directors in wishing you peace, love and happiness not only through this Advent and Christmas seasons, but throughout the entire 2018 year.

Join us now as we prepare to welcome the child who was the original *Messenger of Peace* in Bethlehem.

Your IRMS Staff

This is your time to be a *Messenger of Peace*?

During these contentious times, what will you do to be a *Messenger of Peace* in your community? Have you discovered a meaningful way to share the light of Bethlehem where you live?

**Directors Meeting, Iowa
United Methodist
Conference Center**

For the seventh year, Iowa Religious Media Services is hosting the Peace Light from the Grotto of the Nativity in Bethlehem. During these seven years, "the light" has been shared in over 100 Iowa towns and cities, lighting churches, homes, civic gatherings, schools, jails, nursing homes, and many other venues. While many congregations routinely collect the light to share in worship (especially on Christmas Eve), there have been other unique Peace Light experiences since IRMS first brought the light to Iowa. For instance:

- A child took the light to the nursing home where his grandfather lives.
- A mental health worker took a day off work to drive to Des Moines to pick up the light to take back to her workplace to encourage her co-workers.
- An elderly woman came to IRMS to get the light as a surprise birthday present for sister who had suffered a stroke. When the women sat at the table to transfer the light, they both cried.
- A farmer dressed in his bib overalls brought his barnlantern to collect the light to take to his home church to surprise his congregation on Christmas Eve. The local newspaper did a photo spread about the reaction of the congregation and community.
- A disabled man who lives independently comes every year to take the light to a nearby retirement home. He has never told us why.
- A woman brought her two children to get the light. They do not go to church, but she thought her children needed to see the contrast between a simple light and the secularized messages of the season.



Now in the 31st year of spreading the "Light of Peace" throughout Europe, parts of Asia, North and South America, a young child travels each November from Austria to Bethlehem as a *Messenger of Peace* and kindles a flame from the "Eternal Flame" in the Grotto of the Nativity in Bethlehem. This flame marks the place where we believe Jesus was born into the world. This flame has burned continuously for over one thousand years.



The Light is flown to Austria, where the head of Security for Austrian Airlines carries it on to Kennedy Airport in New York. This year the Peace Light arrived in New York on November 25 and is now being shared throughout the United States, Canada and Mexico by members of the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts.

IRMS secured the Light this past week, and it will burn brightly at our offices in Urbandale 9:30 am to 4:00 pm, Monday through Thursday, December 4 through December 21, and by special arrangements on December 22-24. To safely share the Light with your church and community, you may transfer it to your lantern or long burning devotional candle.



Each of the six individuals mentioned near the beginning of this article was seeking a special way to share the message of peace in a unique way. You, too, can be a *Messenger of Peace* in your own special way. You are limited only by your imagination. Come, receive the Light of Peace to brighten your Advent and Christmas season.

If you have any questions about the Peace Light, how it travels to Iowa, what type of container you need to bring, when you can get the light, or any other questions, please contact us at [515/277-2920](tel:5152772920) or questions@irms.org.

It's time for you to be a Messenger of Peace.

Want to know more about the Bethlehem Peace Light?

This is the history of the light as printed in the Peace Light arrival Ceremony program at Kennedy Airport, November 25, 2017.

Symbolic of the Light of Christ, the Peace Light is meant to promote peace, harmony and unity among the people of the world, regardless of race, ethnicity or creed. For several decades, the International Scouting movement has actively promoted global peace and harmony through the distribution of the Peace Light at Christmastime.

Now in its 31st year, the Peace Light from Bethlehem campaign was originally organized by the Austrian Broadcasting Company - ORF (Linz). It was part of a large charitable relief mission, *Light into Darkness*, to benefit children in need in Austria and abroad. Since 1986, there has been a great deal of cooperation between Scouts in many countries which has allowed the light to travel throughout Europe, allowing the light to be passed in 30 European Countries and, for the past 16 years, to come to America, Canada and Mexico.

Each year, safety permitting, a child from Upper Austria travels as a pilgrim to obtain the flame from the grotto at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem where Jesus was believed

to be born. The light is then flown to Austria where it begins its 10-hour flight to New York. The light is also distributed in Vienna, Austria at a Service of Dedication to delegations from across Europe who take it back, with a message of Peace, to their own countries to use at ecumenical services throughout the Continent. Scouts and Guides then take the light on to churches, hospitals, retirement homes, prisons, and other places of public, cultural and political importance. It is offered to anyone who that appreciates the significance of the "gift."

In past years the light has been presented to Pope Francis, Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, Mikhail Gorbachev, former King Hussain of Jordan, EU President Romano Prodi and other member of the European parliament, the UN Troops in Kosovo, military chaplains, the Rector of St. Patrick's Cathedral in NY, and to the families who lost children at Sandy Hook, CT. In New York City at St. Paul's Chapel on Broadway, the Peace Light has burned on the church altar, as a tribute to this church's role in providing spiritual support and a place for quiet reflection and peace for Ground Zero rescue and recovery workers following the tragic events of 9/11. In past years, volunteers have presented the Peace Light to military chaplains, representing soldiers from Fort Hamilton, Fort Bragg, the Pentagon, Picatinny Arsenal, and other duty stations. The Transatlantic Council of the BSA annually distributes the Peace Light widely on the European Continent to American families and military members working abroad.

"The Light of Friendship and Peace" was first introduced to the United States in the year 2000, when it was flown from Oslo, Norway to Bartlesville, Oklahoma, headquarters of Phillips Petroleum Co., the sponsors of the flight. The light quickly spread to six states in the heartland of America.

In 2001, following the tragic events of 9/11, a collective effort between the Austrian and UK Peace light organizers brought the flame to London's Luton Airport, where it was flown by Phillips Petroleum Co. to Maine, where it was met by Scouters. It was transferred by rail to New York City where it was delivered to mortuary workers at Ground Zero with a message of peace and hope. Soon after, as a gift and message of support and love for all in the United States who were impacted by the events of 9/11, an Austrian Delegation formally presented the light at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City.

Again this year, the Catholic Committee on Scouting for the Diocese of Brooklyn and Queens, has the privilege of welcoming the Light to the United States. The Peace Light has made its long journey from the Grotto of the Nativity in the Town of Bethlehem, City of Jerusalem to Vienna, Austria, and

finally safely across the Atlantic Ocean to North America.

Special thanks to our friends in Austrian Scouting and the professionals of Austrian Airlines for making this trans-Atlantic Peace light Distribution possible. Following a reception at Our Lady of the Skies Chapel, the Peace Light will be distributed by hundreds of Girl and Boy Scouts at many locations nationwide to promote world peace and harmony. If there is to be world peace it must begin at a personal level.

Please note that while Scouts send and receive the peace light for the people of the United States, this symbol, when presented as a gift, can benefit and uplift people of all ages, religions, cultures, and walks of life. The Peace Light committee's goal is to see the Light, distributed to as many groups, organizations, and individuals as possible by New Year's Day 2018.

Many Churches use the Peace Light in Advent worship services and tree lighting events. The Plast, Lithuanian, Polish and Ukrainian Scouting Groups in the USA and Canada maintain an important distribution network for the Peace Light distribution program.

You are invited to send information about your 2017-2018 Peace Light Distributions including photos and links to published articles about your Peace Light events to pdstanton@aol.com, International Representative GNYC BSA. Photos of the November 25, 2017 ceremony are posted at <http://www.ccosbq.org/id7.html>

You will find links to the UK and other World Scouting Peace Light contacts at GAZ's website <http://www.peacelight.org.uk/> This website includes information about safe handling of the Peace light flame and how it is distributed throughout the European Continent and History of the Peace Light "movement."

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