

*A publication of the Strengthening Our Congregations Committee of the Presbytery of Carlisle*

## **The symbolism of Christmas**

**Pudding** *submitted by Pastor Graham Fowler*

Anyone familiar with Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol" has probably heard of Christmas Pudding. As the Cratchit Christmas dinner draws to a close, "Mrs. Cratchit entered with the pudding, like a speckled cannon-ball, so hard and firm, blazing with ignited brandy and with Christmas holly stuck into the top." But what is it?

Christmas Pudding is actually a cake, similar to fruit cake, except the fruit is raisins, and it is cooked by steaming it in a pot rather than baking it in an oven. You may have heard Christmas Pudding referred to as Plum Pudding. That's because in jolly olde England raisins were sometimes called plums.

Because this is a Christmas dessert, some people have attached Christian symbolism to the making of the pudding. Some recipes call for 13 ingredients to represent Jesus and the 12 disciples. Before the Pudding is steamed, people put a coin in the batter. The batter is then stirred by each member of the family as they make a wish. When the Pudding is served, it is believed that the person who finds the coin will get their wish fulfilled. Traditionally the coin was a thruppence (3 penny coin) which represents the Holy Trinity. People stir it

with a wooden spoon to remember the manger Jesus was laid in, and the cross he died upon. They stir the Pudding east to west to remember the Wise Men traveling from the east to visit the baby Jesus. A sprig of holly is placed in the top of the cooked pudding to remember the crown of thorns. And when the Pudding is set on fire it reminds us of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The first Sunday of Advent is sometimes called "Stir Up Sunday" because of the beginning of the traditional prayer of the day.

*Stir up, O Lord, the wills of your faithful people, that richly bearing the fruit of good works, they may by you richly be rewarded; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

It is aptly named because it is also the Sunday when people stir their Christmas Puddings, steam them, then put them away until Christmas Day when they are steamed again and served to the delight of everyone gathered for the Christmas feast.

If you would like a traditional recipe for Christmas Pudding, or even a worship service that explores the symbolism of the Pudding while you prepare it, send an email to Graham Fowler: [pastor@lostcreekpres.org](mailto:pastor@lostcreekpres.org).



**Camp Hill Presbyterian Church** has an annual event called "Scaring Up Socks". Something as simple as a warm pair of socks can make a significant contribution to a person in need. Generous donations provided 172 pairs of men's socks for Bethesda Mission and 106 pairs of women's socks for Bethesda Mission Women's Shelter. You see, "Sock it to Me" can have practical and wonderful applications!