

The Peace Light from Bethlehem to Bayport and Beyond

In Bethlehem, Israel resides one of the oldest continuously operating churches in the world, the Church of the Nativity. It is built over the cave traditionally believed to be the birthplace of Jesus. The current basilica was built in 565 AD, replacing the original which was built in 333 AD.ⁱ The site where Jesus was believed to have been born is marked by a 14 pointed star, and illuminated by lamps that have been continuously burning for as long as anyone can remember.

On November 22nd 2008 Marlene Irndorfer an 11-year-old schoolgirl from Altenberg in Linz Austria collected the 2008 Peace Light from one of the lamps at the site where it is believed that Jesus was born.ⁱⁱ



Three explosion proof miners safety lamps were lit from Marlene's lamp and escorted by the Head of Security and the Head of Safety and Training for Austrian Airlines aboard an Austrian Airlines flight from Tel Aviv Israel to Vienna Austria, where the Peace Light flame was maintained.

During the week of December 14th the Peace Light will be spreading throughout Europe. This is the 22nd year that the Peace Light has spread through Europe^{iv}. It will be aided on it's way^v by the Transatlantic Council of the Boy Scouts of America. The Transatlantic Council serves US Citizens living in Europe, primarily the sons of service members.

On Wednesday December 10th the lanterns with their precious light traveled with the same escorts on an Austrian Airlines flight from Vienna Austria to New York City. Roger Knuteson and Joe Reding met them at the Our Lady of the Air chapel at JFK airport and had their lanterns lit. Their lanterns are the two on the left of the altar.



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Everyone present accepted the challenge of spreading the Peace Light as requested by the Austrians:

"We gladly receive this light as a sign of our willingness to be channels of peace, by our words and actions"

Everyone then sang the following song to the tune Edelweiss. This hymn is a link with the Austrian Scouts and Guides and Scouting Friends in the Transatlantic Council BSA who began the distribution of the Peace Light in Europe at a ceremony in Vienna on December 13, 2008:

**Come, O Lord, be with us
Fill us with joy and thanksgiving
May our hearts flow with peace
Come with Your love, surround us.
Friendship and peace, may they bloom and grow,
Bloom and grow forever.
Bless us now, bless our friends,
Bless all mankind forever.**

**Father God up above
All your blessings surround us
Love and care, everywhere
In the world all around us.
Grant that our services may be of use
Bless the Peace Light endeavor
Father God, up above
Bless us now and forever**

Roger carefully packed the lit lanterns in their specially built travel buckets, and they were on the road to Reedsville Pennsylvania.



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Wednesday night was the first of the twice daily refills of the lanterns. Roger would light a candle from a lantern, ensuring that there would always be at least two flames going at all times. The lantern was then extinguished and placed on a postal scale. Enough smokeless paraffin oil was added to bring the total weight to the empty weight plus 8 ounces of fuel.



Thursday 12/11/08 at 8:00 AM the Peace Light was delivered to the Juniata Valley Council office in Reedsville. There were several people waiting there for the Light. While they were there Roger and Joe did a newspaper interview with the Lewistown Sentinel and a radio station interview with WKVA. The newspaper article is available here: http://www.lewistownsentinel.com/page/content_detail/id/510955.html. The Juniata Valley Council office will have the Light available at the scout office during their normal hours until Christmas. It will also be available at several area churches. There are photos available on their web site www.jvcbasa.org.



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Thursday at 4:00 PM the Peace Light was delivered to Erie Shores Council camp Miakonda. A brief ceremony was held, and then the Peace Light was shared with an oil lamp and the pilot lights in the camp kitchen. The Peace Light is now very securely stored in Toledo. The Erie Shores Council distributed the Light at a Camporee the following weekend.



Roger and Joe met two nuns when they stopped at an oasis along I80. They were very excited to hear about and see the Peace Light. They gave Roger and Joe their blessings and wished them a safe journey. The nuns planned on contacting the Scout office to find out where and when they could get the Peace Light.

Roger and Joe started their mission Friday before they even got out of the hotel in South Bend. They were waiting for the elevator after breakfast and a guy checking out said “hey what Troop are you guys from?” He turned out to be a big time Scouter from Lafayette Indiana in the Sagamore Council. He works for Otis Elevator and was installing a new elevator at Notre Dame. We invited him up to see the Peace Light. He was excited and said he would buy a lamp and pick up the Light from the LaSalle Council office before he went home.

The ceremony at the LaSalle Council^{vii} office in South Bend was great. Dave Sykes, the Assistant Scout Executive who received the Light, was very serious when he read the reception sentence sent by the Austrians. He was excited when he saw the Peace Light song and had everyone sing it along with him. Jackie Rucker, Director of Community Relations for Notre Dame came over to see the Light. She was excited and frustrated. She thinks the light is great but Notre Dame has a strict “no open flames anywhere but the Grotto” policy. It seems they had a rash of fires a couple of years ago. Jackie is going to spread the word on campus to go to the Council office for the Peace Light.



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Roger and Joe arrived in Chicago about 10:00 and waited until 11:00 for everyone else to get there. The Council is not maintaining the Light, but it was taken by the Latvian Scouts, Ukrainian Scouts and Guides and two Scouters who flew up from Mexico City. The Scouters from Mexico City have driven the Peace Light back home. ^{viii}



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The Light was delivered to Glaciers Edge Council in Madison Wisconsin at 3:30 PM. Roger and Joe were a little late due to a single lane freeway caused by pavement replacement. It really got interesting when an ambulance and a fire truck needed to pass just before the construction zone. There were people waiting at the Council office to take the Light when they arrived.



On Sunday 12/14/08 the Peace Light was delivered to all three Bayport Minnesota churches: Bethlehem Lutheran^{ix}, Peoples Congregational^x and St. Charles Catholic^{xi}. The Peace Light was available to the public at Peoples Congregational church from noon until 4:00 PM. About 250 people came to receive the Light. The Light will remain available at Bethlehem Lutheran until Christmas.

Photo from Stillwater Gazette ^{xii}



On Monday 12/15/08 the Peace Light was delivered to the Northern Star Council Hulings Scout Service Center^{xiii} and the Saint Paul Area Synod office of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.^{xiv}

For more information about where the Peace Light has spread select the “Peace Light Map” button on the www.BethlehemStar.org page.

If you have received the Peace Light please let Joe & Roger know where it has traveled at: PeaceLight@BethlehenStar.org

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The Peace Light story has been covered by the Twin Cities media:

Star Tribune: <http://www.startribune.com/local/east/35447174.html?elr=KArksUUUU>

Pioneer Press: http://www.twincities.com/ci_11172291?IADID=Search-www.twincities.com-www.twincities.com

Stillwater Gazette: <http://www.stillwatergazette.com/articles/2008/12/16/news/news520.txt>

ⁱ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_the_Nativity

ⁱⁱ <http://www.peacelight.org.uk/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.peacelight.org.uk/latesteu.html>

^{iv} <http://www.peacelight.org.uk/collect.html>

^v <http://www.tac-bsa.org/international/2008%20Peacelight%20flyer.pdf>

^{vi} <http://www.jvbsa.org/openrosters/ViewPhotoAlbum.asp?orgkey=2038&PhotoAlbumKey=6087>

^{vii} <http://www.lasallecouncilbsa.org/>

^{viii} http://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&u=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.scouts.org.mx/cen_jsn_luzdepazbelen.htm

^{ix} <http://www.bethlehemstar.org/>

^x <http://www.peoplescongregational.org/>

^{xi} <http://parishesonline.com/scripts/HostedSites/Org.asp?ID=3950>

^{xii} <http://www.stillwatergazette.com/articles/2008/12/16/news/news520.txt>

^{xiii} <http://nsbsa.org/>

^{xiv} <http://www.spas-elca.org/>