

ST. ANDREW'S UNITED CHURCH

NOVEMBER 2023

Advent Newsletter



Write For Rights

DECEMBER 10

December 10 after coffee we will **Write for Rights with Amnesty International**. Letter writing supplies will be available and laptops can be brought to use as well.



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The World Needs A Stable Influence

ADVENT 2023!

Christmas is approaching once again! I find this time of year both wonderful and stressful. I look forward to family gatherings, carols, worship services and more – but I also struggle with trying to “do everything right,” which sometimes takes the joy out of it all.

Thematically, Advent is a challenge. It is a penitential/reflective season in preparation for Christmas, for the birth of Christ, for the new life and new possibilities that come in the darkest part of the year. We have our fill of darkness, as always – politics, environment, wars, divisions – I’ll let you make your own list. We also see glimmers of new life as well, especially here in the church – new faces, lots of good work on the building, new possibilities for ministries and partnerships... “The world needs a stable influence” might at first glance make us think of stability. A “stable influence” might be something that steadies us down, keeps things solid and predictable, preserves and grounds what already is. In times of change and turmoil, a bit of stability might very well make us feel better! And stability is certainly better than some of the changes I see around me. But stability is not typically something the Spirit of Christ brings. Jesus talked about repentance, a change in life’s direction, the gospel is about resurrection, new life, and the church has always been about transformation – changed lives – not stabilizing the status quo.

At this time of year, a “stable influence” draws our attention to the Bethlehem stable in our Christmas birth story. It’s such a familiar story to us now that we forget how revolutionary it is! It’s part of the gospel’s “turn the world upside down” theme, about God’s presence on the margins of society, with the poor, and not with the powerful and privileged. In the stable, we are reminded that God’s good news is for the poor, that sinners are welcomed and healed, that God’s way is the power of love, and not the love of power.

We don’t really need to stabilize an unsustainable world consumer economy. We don’t want to preserve and establish our lifestyles of ever-increasing standard of living and ever-decreasing quality of life. There’s a better way, a transformed way, and the stable leads us in that direction.



Hope

REVEREND BARBARA

The season of Advent – the four Sundays before Christmas – is around the corner. One of the songs we sing in the time of Advent starts with these words: “Hope is a star that shines in the night, leading us on till the morning is bright. When God is a child there is joy in our song. The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong, and none shall be afraid.” (Voices United #7).

I love to sing this song, but as someone recently asked me, how can you even speak of hope right now?

Hope is not to be mistaken for optimism. Optimism expects something good is just around the corner. We are optimistic because we have had good things happen to us in the past. We are optimistic about our Christmas dinner: a delicious turkey with all the trimmings of wonderful stuffing, creamy mashed potatoes and... (I let you add your special yummy treat). We are optimistic because as long as we remember we had a special Christmas meal.

Hope, on the other hand, is a spiritual gift independent of the actual life circumstances we may find ourselves in. Hope is grounded in trusting the faithfulness of God.

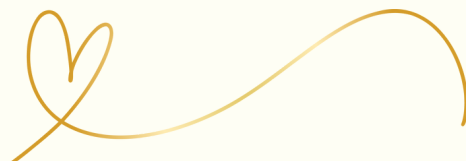
And yet, we are still in the middle of life’s complexities, the pain, sorrow and worry that won’t let us go.

Maybe we can lean into hope by sharing hope with others, giving tangible hope. The season holds many different ways to give hope, locally through Santa’s Anonymous, globally through the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, to name just two.

In the words of Lauren Thompson,

“Hope is a heart that is open to the world around you. Hope is knowing that things change - and that we can help things to change for the better.”

May we all be blessed with the gift of hope this Advent season.



Winter in the Pollinator Garden

WITH GREEN THUMBS UP GRATITUDE! DIANNA, DONNIE, BARBARA

Did you notice some buzzing amid the splash of bright blooms in the flowerbeds this summer? The bees sure noticed!

Right and left of the side entry door a pollinator garden was started in the spring of this year. We had a lot of support, especially from our long-time gardeners Norm Start and Hans Haefliger who keep the grounds around the church looking amazingly beautiful. Thank you all!

We hope to continue to invite bees and butterflies to our little patch, and therefore will keep it less tidy, to provide much needed overwintering sites.



Advent Giving

DOUG MAAS

As we prepare for the Advent season, think of how blessed we are and how abundant our lives are. However, for many in our local community and our world community, this is not the case.

Advent means many things to me, giving hope to people and expressing love through generosity are central tenets. St. Andrew's has a strong outreach tradition. As we enter this time of Advent, please consider these ideas as a way to offer gifts to assist others less fortunate.

LOCAL

Once again, we will be accepting Lacombe Food Bank donations and unwrapped gifts for Santa's Anonymous starting on Dec. 3rd.

Lacombe FCSS Fill A Fridge and Benevolent Fund are two wonderful programs that help the disadvantaged in our local community. Cash donations can be made at the FCSS office above Mary C. Moore Library for these programs and you will receive an instant charitable tax receipt. FCSS employees will answer any questions you may have on how these programs work.

INTERNATIONAL

There are so many excellent Canadian charities that help people throughout the world. The Canadian Foodgrains Bank and the Humanitarian Coalition are two such charities currently helping with aid in the Gaza strip, and here, our own Friends of Guatemala group that assist Mayan people.

At future Sunday services, you will hear more about these giving ideas, and you can always reach out to me, Doug Maas - Chair, Outreach Team, at 403 318-5733.

Lift Someone Into The Light

NOVEMBER 23



Thursday, November 23 saw our 3rd annual 'Lift Someone into the Light' event which was held in conjunction with the City of Lacombe's 'Light Up the Night' celebration. From 5:30 - 7:30 we had members of the community stop by, decorate an ornament in memory of someone they hold dear and hang it on the special tree outside of the church. It was a chilly night; we had hot chocolate and a warm fire for people to enjoy as they visited with friends and neighbours.



One of the activities surrounding this event were the stories people had as they decorated their ornaments. We would like to share a few of those, with more to come in the next Newsletter.

**Life weaves some threads that carry us through our time here on earth. Mine began in Brooks, where I was born. My father was Principal of the Brooks' school and like all schools on the prairies, sports were played in competition with neighboring towns, and Duchess, led by their Principal, Lous Whitehorn, was the main competitor.*

We moved to Calgary when I was 3. I took all my schooling, including teacher training, during those years. I moved to Lacombe to teach Grade 2.

In 1969 I heard a talk, given by a mental health representative, asking people to take the name of a lonely person in a nursing home and to send them cards and letters on special occasions. Our United Church women all took a name. In 1978, the Barr Colonists, who came to Canada in 1903, were celebrating their 75 years in Lloydminster, SK. The Queen and Prince Philip were coming to help celebrate. My mother was only 1 1/2 when she came with her family as a colonist but received an invitation. I offered to drive her over to the celebrations.

On our way home that evening we drove by the small town of Mundare and Mother wondered what had happened to Louis Whitehorn, the Principal of Duchess. He apparently had moved to Mundare to teach. That name struck a bell. Louis Whitehorn was the gentleman to whom I was sending cards! That name was not familiar to me because I was only 3 when we left Brooks.

The next day we went to Castor and, sure enough, Louis recognized Dad. They talked for a minute or two before Louis' Alzheimer's set in. Was it a coincidence or was it one of those threads of life that link us to each other?



Lift Someone Into The Light

CONTINUED

Two little boys, about 6 years old, who proudly introduced themselves as cousins, made with great care an ornament each and hung them in the tree for each other. They then walked away together with arms around each other's shoulders.

One 13 year old girl (she told me her age) hung up an ornament for her beloved grandmother who had died a few months earlier. She shared with me how much she misses baking cookies with her "Nana" but feels her grandmother would love to see her keep on baking and that's why, upon arriving home, she would bake a batch of her grandmother's favorite sugar cookies.

Love and light to all who struggle in a world they don't understand and that doesn't understand them.

I would like to honor single mothers who struggle to look after their children when, for one reason or another, they are left to manage their families and households without a partner. Those of us who have raised children in co-operation with a loving mate know that even then, the task is quite demanding. God's blessing on single mothers!

If you were unable to join us to do up an ornament Thursday evening, the supplies will be in the parlor for you to make one any time and we will be there on Sundays to offer our assistance.



Lift Someone Into The Light

CONTINUED



Christmas On The Farm

WONDER OF CHRISTMAS

It has become a beloved tradition to gather under the open sky one winter evening in the season of Advent to enjoy each other and the gift of this special time. We are warmly inviting you to come together with others from St. Andrew's around the magic of an open fire welcoming the wonder of Christmas. Yes, hot chocolate and cookies will be there too!

When: December 8 @ 6pm.

Where: Krazy Eh Farms (Woodrow-Yakimishyn Family), Clive, AB.



Three ways to get there:

- 1) Meet at St. Andrew's Church at 5:30 pm to carpool to the farm
- 2) Google Krazy Eh Farms
- 3) Pick up printed directions at the church office

Any questions? Contact Barbara @ 403-318-4000

Hope to see you all out there! Karen, Edwin, Larissa, Annerie and Barbara



Men's Breakfast Club Volunteers

NATIVITY & LIGHTS SETUP

A very BIG thank you to all who came out on Saturday November 18th to help set up the nativity scene and lights....and to prep the hall for drywall!



The Broom Tree Foundation

CHURCH LIAISON

The Broom Tree Foundation is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to serving women and their families in Central Alberta. Currently the Broom Tree is seeking an individual who would be willing to act as a liaison between their home church and the Broom Tree Foundation. If this might be of interest to you, please contact:

Tamara Noordhof, RSW
Program Director
The Broom Tree Foundation
(825) 221-0396

Property

PROGRESS COMPLETED SINCE THE LAST UPDATE:



- a) Tile roofers came and did an excellent job repairing everything. They think it is good for anywhere from 5-15 years so that was \$3000 well spent. (replacement with asphalt shingles had seen quotes ranging from \$68000 to \$100000)
- b) Thanks to a whole lot of work by Bob and Dennis and several others we were able to get the auditorium ready for the insulation people who have now completed all the insulating elsewhere in the buildings as well as in the auditorium.
- c) New double doors installed, equipped, and rekeyed (we were able to install our old locks), touch pad reinstalled and security system reconnected.
- d) Thanks to Hans and Bob a beautiful stained glass door has been installed (part of Vic Bergen's kind gesture in memory of Sue) in the secretarial office and the office is now stripped down ready for refinishing.
- e) Auditorium has been prepped for the drywallers thanks to a big work-crew of volunteers.
- f) A number of smaller tasks thanks again to assorted volunteers.

STILL TO DO:

- a) Drywall the auditorium and other spots. Starts Nov. 20th and they estimate 3 weeks due to drying times.
- b) Paint entire auditorium, part of the hallway, part of the stairway up to the offices, office bathroom, and the secretarial office. A big thankyou to the ladies who, working with the painter, did an excellent job of making the painting decisions.
- c) Complete the finish carpentry around the new windows and doors.
- d) Some re-ducting work in the furnace room adjacent to the preschool.
- e) Complete the office renovation project.
- f) Wrap up several other time-consuming tasks the volunteers are systematically discharging.

The auditorium will be unavailable from Nov 20th until mid December.

We hope to be finished by Christmas. Keep your fingers crossed! Once completed we will give you a detailed report on everything.

Thank you for your ongoing patience, support, and understanding.

Gary

St. Andrew's Basement

AN IMPORTANT UPDATE FROM THE BOARD



I would like to bring you up to date on where things currently stand regarding potential long-term use of the entire basement.

An ad hoc committee consisting of Ron Gish, Greg Pallister, Lawrence Hrycan, Doug Maas, and Gary MacDonald has been tasked with exploring ideas for the future of the St. Andrew's building. In the committee's research, child care was revealed to be one of the primary needs of Lacombe and area.

Loving to Learn Daycare has been exploring the possibility of creating more child care space at St. Andrew's and began exploring this option with the ad hoc committee and the board. The committee feels that this idea fits well with our desire that the building be a resource for our own mission and used in service to the community of which we are a part.

The Board unanimously passed the following motion at the regular meeting on November 6th:



"That the board of St. Andrews United Church approve in principle, the concept of Loving to Learn Preschool and Daycare leasing the basement of St. Andrew's United Church with the understanding that this will be a long-term partnership."

The ad hoc committee has begun to tackle this process on behalf of the Board and the congregation.



We are at the beginning of the process and have many bridges to cross yet. The committee visualizes communicating closely with the congregation and user groups via conversations, town hall meetings, and newsletter submissions.

In the opinion of the Board and the visioning committee this has the potential to prove a long-term success for everybody.

Respectfully submitted,
Monique Vermegen, Board Chair



Advent Events 2023

Christmas On The Farm
December 8, 2023
6 PM



Christmas Cantata
December 10, 2023
10:30 AM



White Gift Sunday
December 10, 2023



Blue Christmas Service
December 21, 2023
7 PM



Christmas Eve Services
December 24, 2023
7 & 9 PM

