

Sunday, December 22

10:30 Service
 12:00 p.m. Youth Choir practice – Parlour
 12:00 p.m. Sermon Talkback – Common Room
 12:00 - 2:00 p.m. Rehearsal for Christmas play

Tuesday, December 24 – Christmas Eve

7:00 p.m. Family Service – Sanctuary
 10:00 p.m. Service with carols and communion - Sanctuary

Wednesday, December 25 – Merry Christmas!

Wed., Dec. 25 – Wed., Jan. 1 – office closed

Minister's message: It may seem to some that we have been celebrating Lent rather than Advent given the heavy subject matter of recent sermons. We generally see Advent as a time of hope and expectation in the lead up to Christmas. Advent means "coming" and so this season is a time to reflect on the coming of Christ. We do this waiting for his coming as a baby, but not only in this capacity. We also wait for his "second coming" at the end of the age, along with his coming as an adult to announce the nearness of God's Reign. That is why traditionally the first three Sundays are end time readings plus a focus on John the Baptist. Historically in the Christian tradition "Awake" and "Repent" are Advent words. That being said, I admit that my preaching has been darker than even that part of the Advent tradition. One of the challenges of preaching, especially when you venture away from the lectionary as we did this year, is to "listen to the Spirit" while also being sensitive to the needs of those who will be "listening" to the sermon. When the idea for a sermon series based on Matthew's version of Jesus' genealogy came up in bible study last Advent, I had no idea where my study and prayer would take me, especially as my ponderings collided with what was going on in the world - International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, the 30th Anniversary of the Montreal Massacre, ongoing political tensions in both the UK and US. My preaching went where my mind suggested the text was leading us, but I also needed to listen with my heart to what many of you would be hoping for given the time of year. I'm sorry for that. As we look to this coming Sunday, the descending night is breaking and dawn is on the horizon as Mary and Joseph say yes to the coming of the light. We all are invited to do the same, in how we live, and from my context, how we preach as well.

worship and music

Sunday, Dec. 22: We shift our focus from Jesus' ancestors to his immediate family as we reflect on Luke 1:26-38, when Gabriel appears to Mary and Matthew 1:18-25, when Gabriel appears to Joseph. In both, what is critical is the "yes" of the one to whom Gabriel appears. We begin the service with a brief Carol Sing.

After the youth choir rehearsal, there will be a special rehearsal in preparation for the Christmas Eve play.

Special Sermon Talkback: The Sermon Talkback that is normally held on the second Sunday of the month will be held in the Common Room 15 minutes following the end of the worship service. This is an opportunity to "talkback" in regard to the various sermon topics presented this past Advent.

Saturday, December 21st, 7:00 p.m. Winter Solstice Service.

We will gather at 19 Church St. S. to mark this darkest time of year. We will begin inside before going outdoors to burn the Yule log and share our hopes for the coming year. Hosted by our in-house eco-spirituality group, Three Rivers Forest Church.

Tuesday, December 24th - Christmas Eve

7:00 p.m. A service geared to the young at heart with carols and a dramatic presentation of the Christmas message.

10:00 p.m. An adult oriented service of carols, candle light and the celebration of communion. We reflect on the story of Jesus' birth as told in Luke's gospel as well as in Matthew's.

Sun., December 29th - 1st Sunday after Christmas

10:30 a.m. We celebrate the Christmas season with stories and Christmas Carols as we reflect on another part of Matthew's telling of Jesus' birth: Joseph and Mary leaving their home to settle in Egypt. We celebrate baptism.

Sun., January 5th - 2nd Sunday after Christmas

10:30 a.m. In this "All Ages Service" we hear another "birth" story as Matthew tells how Jesus was baptized. We reflect on the meaning of baptism and share in communion. Following worship, we gather in Centennial Hall for a festive, family-friendly conclusion to the Christmas season.

Sun., January 12th – Jesus in the Wilderness?

10:30 a.m. Having marked the celebration of Jesus' baptism a week early, we turn our attention to a gospel story usually heard at the beginning of Lent. Does hearing the story of Jesus tempted in the wilderness as we conclude Christmas rather than as a preparation for Easter change it for us?

programs for all

Special Meditation for New Year's: On Tuesday, Dec. 31, we will be holding a special meditation service at 7:00 pm in the chapel. Participants are asked to bring a reading that speaks to either the spirit of the year that is ending or a hope for the year that is coming. There will be a 20 minute centering time as part of the meditation. Participants are also asked to bring some nibbles to share. The service and fellowship will conclude by 8:30 in order to give participants time to take part in other New Year's festivities.

Bible Study: We will resume in January should there be interest. Please let James know if you want bible study to continue.

Shalom Seekers: Shalom Seekers, will be taking a break for the holidays. We will reconvene **on Monday, January 6th from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m.** in the Chapel. At that time we will start a discussion of the book "Everything Happens for a Reason (And Other Lies I've Loved)" by Kate Bowler. For that session, please read the Preface and Chapter One: Diagnosis. New members are always welcome. Please speak to Peg Hiscoke or Sandra Loughton (Co-Facilitators) for more details. We hope you have a wonderful Advent and Christmas season. See you in the New Year!

RHUC Book Club: Please join us on **Wednesday, January 29th at 7 p.m.** in the RHUC Chapel to discuss two books: **The Story of Arthur Truluv** by Elizabeth Berg AND **Now That You Mention It** by Kristan Higgins. Both of these books are more light-hearted than the 'heavier' books we have been reading this fall. New members are welcome to join us at any time. No previous book club experience is necessary - just a love of reading and discussing books. We are a friendly bunch! For more details about the group, please speak to Deb Fratin in the church office (905.884.1301) or Sandra Loughton, Book Club Facilitator.

H.A.I.R.: (Heretics, Agnostics, Infidels and Other Riffraff) is the Monday evening study group where we gather to explore questions, express doubts, and realize that we are not the only ones who have wondered these things. We meet from 7 – 8:30 in the chapel. Please join us any Monday to explore your faith and its applicability to our lives, to ask the questions you may not have felt comfortable raising, and to learn with and from a stimulating group of fellow questioners.

Faith Exploration: Are you curious about Christian teaching? Do you want to know more about the beliefs and practices of The United Church of Canada? Are you thinking about being baptized or confirmed? Or perhaps you just want to explore your faith from an adult perspective? Then consider participating in Faith Exploration sessions. They are held on the 1st, 3rd and 5th Sundays of the month, beginning at about 12:15 pm. For more information, email James (james@rhuc.org).

outreach activities

Out of the Cold: This is just a heads up for anyone who would like to help out on Mondays in February and March with making a dinner at St. Mary's Anglican for our Out of the Cold friends. We get together from 11:30 to 1:30 on four Mondays - two in February and two in March and make a home cooked winter dinner. It's fun for us and we know how appreciated it is by the diners! Let me or the office know if you would like to join us or help out in any way (cookies anyone?) Lyn May

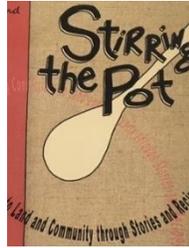
Gifts With Vision: The United Church of Canada has released this year's gift catalogue, an alternative to the usual catalogues of "stuff"! Looking through, you can choose which project you would like to support in the name of someone on your Christmas shopping list. These projects have been verified and are monitored to ensure they are working towards people's wellbeing. The areas of support included are: Healing & Reconciliation, Leadership, Wellness, Safe Spaces, Education, Poverty and Hunger. Some are in Canada and some are global efforts; they support children and adults; and they range from \$10 to \$200 each. The projects speak to all this with the name **Gifts with Vision** - they offer immediate assistance working towards a vision of justice for all. Talk this over with the family and get children involved in knowing the great work they can help with. Copies of the catalogue are in RHUC office, at the Welcome table or go to www.giftswithvision.ca to see the projects - you can place your order and pay on line, making shopping easy. Give others and yourself the gifts of this Advent season: hope, peace, joy and love. Donna Smith 905-884-6307

Minute for Mission: Rhonda Johns, Program Coordinator of Nations Uniting on the Six Nations of the Grand River First Nation in Oshweken, Ontario, engages with a lot of seniors, many of whom are residential school survivors, and with youth who don't know who they are and where they belong. Observing this intergenerational dynamic, she realized that many on the reserve needed to experience healing. She asked herself what she could do. The answer came to her in the form of the Reclaiming Our Path program. It helps youth and young adults understand who they are and how behaviours learned from the families raising them, peers, and the community, impact who they are. Using an Indigenous framework and traditional teachings, individuals and families now have an opportunity to reframe who they are and begin to walk a new path toward a future of hope. Reclaiming Our Path is a way to create healthy future leaders.

church news

Volunteer Counters Needed: After service each Sunday, teams of 3 counters gather in the office to count, record and prepare the offering for deposit. We're looking for 3 volunteers to fill vacancies. The commitment is around 30 minutes every 5 weeks. Please speak to Dianne McLeod after the service if interested.

For Sale: We knew there were some of RHUC publication of *Stirring the Pot* left but there are many more that "some". *Stirring the Pot* was a project we worked on in 2003, having gatherings in homes to share our family's stories about the connectedness to the land and the importance of food in building and sustaining community. Eighty members wrote their story about a favourite family recipe, which ancestor it came from and why it has remained significant in their lives. Many "tried and truly good" recipes! The cost of this book was \$20 and we sold many copies easily, covering the publishing costs and making a nice profit for our church. We would like to realize even more money for the church by selling more copies, now for a cost of \$8! Many people have joined our faith family since then and reading these stories will acquaint you with many people. The books are available from Deb in the church office during the week and after service on Sundays. A different and interesting Christmas gift to give. Donna Smith, 905-884-6307



A MAP Minute: Intention 1 of our MAP, "Be a culture of welcome, respect and safety where we honour one another and respect diversity", named as a part of this, a desire to "strengthen a sense of community within the congregation", especially by facilitating fun activities for people to meet others including activities that are multi-generational. This desire was also named at the "Leadership and Congregational Development Forum" last June. In response to this, members of the CD Committee would like to hold a post-worship Epiphany Party. This is regular fellowship that is ramped up a couple of notches with a "king cake" in honour of the magi, a few crafts and games, and especially a time for us all to have some fun together. If you would like to run a game for children or to lead a craft, especially one that is focused on "light", please contact James (james@rhuc.org).

Finance: 2020 offering envelopes are available for pick up in Centennial Hall.



We appreciate those who have passed in their pledge form and we would really appreciate receiving pledge forms from those who have not yet done so to the church office or in the offering plate by the end of December. The pledges are SO important to help with financial planning!

Are you planning to move away? Do you know of someone who is? Problem: the church finds out that someone attends RHUC has moved, often well after the fact! We feel badly that their life and contribution to our worship and work has not been recognized and our goodbye and best wishes have not been expressed. Please let me or Deb in the Church Office of any such moving plans. Thanks, Donna Smith, 905-884-6307

Ladies - circle this date: Friday, January 31 to Sunday, February 2, 2020 because that's the **Women's Winter Weekend**. More info will follow the beginning of January or phone Donna Smith, 905-884-6307.

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