

**This week at a glance****Sunday, December 17 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent**

10:30 a.m. Service  
12:00 p.m. Youth Choir practice – Common room

**Wednesday, December 20**

7:00 p.m. Longest Night Service - Sanctuary

**Thursday, December 21**

7:00 p.m. Winter Solstice service - Chapel  
7:00 p.m. Chancel Choir Christmas Social – home of Craig and Mary Lee

**Sunday, December 24<sup>th</sup> – Christmas Eve**

10:30 a.m. Our crèche is added as the final decorations in preparation for Christmas. The fourth Advent candle is lit as we anticipate the festivities to come.  
7:00 p.m. A service geared to the young and young at heart with carols, Christmas readings 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.

**WORSHIPPING TOGETHER****Worship****Sun., December 17<sup>th</sup> - Third Sunday in Advent**

**10:30 a.m.** This coming Sunday is an All Ages Service. A service that is engaging for everyone from the young in years to the young at heart. With the visit of Gabriel to Mary (Luke 1:28-36) as the bible reading, our focus is on the ways we welcome the Christ child. We will highlight Christmas traditions in Canada, Colombia and the Caribbean. The following Sunday is the Fourth Sunday of Advent, and Christmas Eve. With that in mind, we plan to anticipate Christmas with a mini pageant for the very small during our Learning Together time.

On Sunday you will notice that our "Church at Work and Worship" portion of the service is later in the service. This is to facilitate the children and youth leaving the sanctuary after the first half of the service for a rehearsal.

**Wednesday, December 20<sup>th</sup>**

**7:00 p.m. Longest Night Service** Hosted by Richmond Hill United Church and co-led with Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church, St. Mary's Anglican Church, St. Matthew's United Church, and St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church, this quiet and reflective service is for anyone who has experienced loss and finds this season difficult. There will be an opportunity to light a candle in memory of someone and to receive anointing. Refreshments will be served in Centennial Hall.

**Thursday, December 21<sup>st</sup>, 7:00 p.m.**

Winter Solstice Service. We will gather in the chapel before moving outside to mark this darkest time of year by burning the Yule log and sharing our hopes for the coming year. Hosted by our in-house eco-spirituality group, Three Rivers Forest Church.

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**Sun., December 31<sup>st</sup> – 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Christmas**

**10:30 a.m.** We both celebrate the Christmas season and anticipate the New Year in this fun service of Carols and a recommitting to walking the way of Jesus.

## Advent givings

This year our **Advent Offering** is directed toward Ninokomtin - a Newmarket not for profit organisation dedicated to serving off-reserve Indigenous people in the York and South Simcoe region. **Envelopes are in the pews this Sunday, December 17 (last week).**

## Christmas Eve play rehearsal

All cast members and others wishing to join: **We will attend the first half of Worship on the Sunday morning of December 17 and then rehearse in the Chapel.** There will also be a short rehearsal in the Sanctuary following the service. For info call Donna at 905 884 0095.

## Minister's Message

With all of the twinkling lights it is easy to forget that this is the darkest time of the year. Ironic given that we made this a time of twinkling lights because it is the darkest time of the year. For many this is a dark time not just physically but emotionally as well. Some have experienced the death of a loved one or the ending of a relationship in the past year. Others may have a serious health concern, have lost their independence or have experienced job loss. Some may have experienced any of these losses during the holiday season and so find this time of year to be an annual reminder. Whatever the cause, not everyone feels jolly at this time of year. It is for that express reason that each year we host a "Longest Night Service" - a quiet and reflective time for all who experience a sense of loss in this darkest time of the year. You will notice that this year, the actual longest night is the next day. The local ministers who co-lead this service have decided to set this service on a Wednesday each year. This keeps the service from drifting to different days each year, including a Friday or Saturday. This has also made room for us to celebrate the Winter Solstice as a Forest Church celebration. Both of these services acknowledge that the end of December is a time of darkness. They also point to the coming of light, to the day when the shadows are less long and we can experience new life once more.

## Scripture readings – power of language

Have you ever thought about the power of the language you learned as a child compared to those you learned later in life? They speak at a heart level, something that is so important when it comes to the Bible. With this in mind, beginning in Advent, we plan to begin offering print versions of each week's scripture reading in languages other than English. If this is something you would appreciate, please let Deb or James know what language would be most meaningful for you and, if you know, what version of the Bible you prefer.

## 2018 UCC Calendars

2018 United Church calendars are available from Donna Smith, 905-884-6307, or from the church office for \$5.00

## Would you like to be an usher?

The 2018 ushering schedule is in progress. If you are interested in more information on becoming an usher, please call the office at 905-884-1301 ext. 5.

## Worship Matters

Here is another article in an on-going series -- keeping you up-to-date with Worship Committee plans, changes, and news. In response to the service on November 26th where we had 20 minutes of announcements, **the Worship Committee is changing the way we do announcements.** The cut-off for letting James know that you'd like to make an announcement on Sunday is Friday. It isn't really fair to him to come and ask at the last minute. If that happens, James may make the announcement for you, if there aren't already a lot of other people making announcements.

The main issue is the length of some of the announcements. We are going to try a new system and that is keeping announcements to a maximum of 50 words. Think of it as a creative challenge and a way to hone your writing skills!

Finally, with respect to making announcements, please ensure that you come up the stairs closest to the piano to make your announcement, and exit via the other stairs to allow for an easy flow of traffic. Thank you for your attention to these details. While we are all happy to be part of a vibrant church where a lot is happening, we have to try and keep our worship services to a reasonable length and part of that is making sure the announcements are succinct. Please speak to me or anyone from the Worship Committee if you have comments, questions or concerns.

(James, Barry, Anne Leyton-Brown, Anne Dunn, Craig Lee, Dawn Moon, Dominick Shelton, Harry Ramsaran, Joan Verner, Linda Clark, Sandra Loughton) *Sandra Loughton, Chair, Worship Committee*

**Looking for a Christmas tree**

As we did last year, it is our hope to once again have a "wish tree" outside of the church. As you will recall, we had slips of paper that people could write their prayerful "wishes" for the coming year on and then tie them to the tree. With this in mind, we are once again looking for a household who will be taking down their "real" Christmas tree before the 30th of December. Contact James at [james@rhuc.org](mailto:james@rhuc.org) or 905-884-1301 ext. 3 if you can help us in this way.

**HOSPITALITY & WORKING FOR JUSTICE**

**Minute for Mission  
*Called to be the Church***

Our gifts for Mission & Service offer support to congregations. Let us hear a story from central Newfoundland. Worship is at 3:00 p.m. at Northern Arm Pastoral Charge, a fourpoint pastoral charge. Its members feel this is a convenient time for worshippers to gather. It also gives folks of other traditions who are curious a good opportunity to check the church out. Northern Arm is a warm, welcoming pastoral charge of The United Church of Canada on the beautiful Bay of Exploits. Worship is held in one of its beautiful churches each week. The charge receives a Mission Support Grant funded by Mission & Service. At the end of each year, if any funds are left over, Northern Arm makes a donation to Mission & Service in the spirit of gratitude to pay it forward. We sing thanksgiving for the giving heart of communities of faith whose gifts for Mission & Service change lives and offer hope! If Mission & Service is already a regular part of your giving, thank you so much! If you have not given for Mission & Service, please join me in making Mission & Service a regular part of your life of faith. In all our Mission & Service giving, with a willing heart, we sing thanksgiving to God!

**Living into Right Relations**

The Truth and Reconciliation Committee's report included some Calls to Action for churches. One of these requested churches to begin to educate their constituencies about the United Nations Declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples (affectionately known as DRIPS), with the goal to ensure we are complying with the Declaration. Over the course of this year, the Living in Right Relation's committee will be sharing the articles in DRIPS. We are already at Article 10:

Indigenous peoples shall not be forcibly removed from their lands or territories. No relocation shall take place without the free, prior and informed consent of the indigenous peoples concerned and after agreement on just and fair compensation and, where possible, with the option of return.

These Articles are also being posted on the listening post in Centennial Hall and they can all be found at this link: [http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS\\_en.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf)

We are hoping to encourage dialogue about how we can be part of ensuring justice and voice for the indigenous peoples of Canada.

**Mask Sculpting Workshop**



Sign up today!

Andrea Chan, a gifted local artist, is offering to teach a half day **Mask Sculpture workshop as a fundraiser for Stephen Lewis Foundation**. Possible date for this three hour workshop will be Sat Jan 27 or Sat Feb 3. Cost is \$80 and location is at RHUC in the old nursery, now called Common Room. Andrea requires a month lead in to prepare the base of the mask so we ask you to register your interest soon.

For pre-registration and more information, please speak to Linda Clark or Peg Hiscoke at our signup table after the service. A \$40 deposit is requested on registration.

This could be a special gift for someone in your family or for yourself. Join the fun and help make a difference for African AIDS families.

**Winter coats needed for First Nations Teens!**



Winter Coats urgently needed for First Nations Teens in the North!

Update: <https://twitter.com/theagenda/status/941150760833728512>

HIP ('Honouring Indigenous Peoples') received a request from Andr e Cazabon (Director of the movie "Third World Canada") for winter coats and running shoes for 100 teens attending Thunder Bay's "Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School." (DFC). To attend the closest high school, these indigenous students must live away from home throughout their 4 high school years, and board in Thunder Bay. Unfortunately, there is no other high school in their 20+ remote, fly-in, First Nations communities. They come from the northwest quadrant of the province of Ontario, a catchment area larger than the size of some entire countries. There's lots of info online about DFC and the challenges faced by DFC students, eg. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/breaking-the-cycle-inside-a-high-school-that-is-reimagining-indigenous-education/article25146175/>



These high school students, ages 14 & up, miss their families and home communities, throughout their grades 9, 10, 11 and 12 high school years. They don't have money, and need new or gently used, adult sized (not child or youth sized, with a special need for some larger adult sizes too):

- winter coats (+ hats, mitts/gloves, scarves, snow pants, boots)
- backpacks
- running shoes & sports gear (eg soccer, baseball, skating, hockey or other)

Once generous donors provide these much-needed items, HIP will help ship them directly to the school, so the students receive warm coats early in January in the bitterly cold Winter Semester.

How you can help!

1. Donate a new, or gently used and clean, adult sized winter coat (has, mitts/gloves, scarves, boots, snow pants are also welcome!), backpack, running shoes or sports gear, during December!

Please drop off items (or donation cheques for which tax receipts are provided by HIP) at Richmond Hill United Church, 10,201 Yonge St (at Centre Street just north of Major Mackenzie Drive), Richmond Hill L4C 3B2. Please bring donated items to the church office for storage until shipment, or the Coffee Room behind the Office. [Church hours: Deb Fratin (905) 884-1301 ext. 5 [office@rhuc.org](mailto:office@rhuc.org)] Questions? Kathy & Rod McBey (647) 458-2717 [kathryn.mcbeey@gmail.com](mailto:kathryn.mcbeey@gmail.com)

2. Make a financial donation!

<https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/HIP/campaign/coatdrive/>

All funds raised will go directly to purchasing and transporting donations to students of Dennis Franklin Cromarty School in Thunder Bay. HIP is a registered charity and tax receipts will be provided. No amount is too small and all donations are thankfully received! Cheques delivered to the church should be made payable to 'HIP'. Please on the cheque, (and on online donations @ "Include a Message for this Charity"), identify this special project, by noting "Winter Coats - DFC High School".

3. Spread the word! Please forward and share this request with all of your contacts. Donations from friends, family, neighbours, coworkers, and email contacts, are all gratefully received and will be well used!

*This is our chance to give important support to Ontario First Nations teens who truly need our help! ~*

**Gifts with Vision**

We have received the new 2017-2018 alternative gift catalogue from the United Church of Canada. It contains the usual assortment of charities you can support through giving a donation in someone's name - a gift from you to help others, given in their name. Gift cards are available to let the person know you thought of them with this gift for others. Those especially hard to buy for or those who have everything might appreciate your desire to alleviate another's hardship here in Canada and around the world. Needs range from meeting an immediate need, like hunger and shelter; to tackling employment, like providing education or small business start-up money; to sending a kid to camp or buying basic school supplies. There are some catalogues on the welcome table but you can also do everything on the web: [giftswithvision.ca](http://giftswithvision.ca) This is the *alternative way of giving, and giving something that is really needed!* Contact: Donna Smith 905-884-6307

**ENGAGING, CHALLENGING & GROWING OUR FAITH****Thank you form the United Church Women!**

The UCW would like to thank everyone who supported us at our Christmas Tea and Bake Sale. We could not have done it without you. While our numbers in attendance were down, those that came enjoyed themselves as they relaxed and sipped hot cups of tea and ate sandwiches and scones etc. A BIG THANK YOU to Donna Smith for her help with organising the donations of food and the servers. You are an Angel. We will let everyone know shortly how much we made for the event.

**Books to Give Away**

Last week you will have read about the relocation of our church library to the outer office (that's where the lift opens to the CD Building). As noted, we pared down our collection, making available various books, bibles and hymn books for you to browse and take home (please use sign-out folder to indicate book, date and your name). A table has been set up in Centennial Hall for you to browse through the titles. Help yourself and if you feel inclined, make a donation to the church for new books and other supplies for Christian Development!

**RHUC Book Club**

The book club will meet again in the New Year on **Wednesday, January 31st at 7 p.m. in the Chapel**. The book is to be announced near the end of December as we are planning to get a book club set of 15 books from the Markham Library which we can have out for six weeks. It will depend which of our choices are available at the time of pick-up. Sandra will pick up the books and let people know that they are available for pick-up at the church or will bring them on a Sunday for distribution.

**Special Occasions**

While we include in our prayers, the names of people who are ill or mourning, we are not always aware of the special occasions which give rise to rejoicing. Please let us know to add any special occasions that are coming up.

RHUC has received a gift: a beautiful handmade quilt depicting the Christmas story.  
Our previous minister, **Linda Butler**, made this for us and it is hanging in Centennial Hall.  
Our sincere thanks to Linda for her loving gift.

**BUILDING FOR MINISTRY****Cash card order**

Thank you to Sherry Lynn Ward for her corporate purchase that earned RHUC \$124.50! That brings RHUC cash card earnings to \$433.50 this month and **\$1,472.92 this year!**

**Generous Spirit**

**Please remember to submit your Pledge Forms for 2018.** The form may be placed on the Sunday morning offering plate, or dropped off in the church office. If you have misplaced your pledge form, you may pick up an additional form after service in Centennial Hall on Sunday from Nancy Hart.

Minute for Stewardship: 'Let me tell you a little of myself and my love for this church We came as a family, my mother, a husband and two little boys to Richmond Hill in 1967 I often said we were The Centennial gift to R.H. We needed a church for our family and this old church in the middle of town appealed to us and we found a little later that the minister Bob Smith was just the right minister for us. We had our membership transferred from my home church in Toronto and gradually became involved by teaching Sunday School and I took on the role of SS superintendent. I was attached to this church in many ways but it was my role as a Lay Pastoral Visitor that my faith began to deepen.

When I retired I joined with the Shalom Seekers who meet each Monday morning where we study various Theologians, have intense discussions around our faith with respect and appreciation for one another and plenty of laughter I might add. I have been influenced by the many ministers we have been so fortunate to have and to the direction they have given me. I remain inspired by the music where I am often left feeling transfixed by the Holy

In this place I was able to take a hard look at my faith, to question some of the beliefs that I hung on to.

I began to recognize my place in this world as a Christian and to act out my faith in my daily life. This is the place where I form relationships with those who share my values. This Church is my home.

I remain optimistic that we shall find a solution in order to maintain this space, perhaps not exactly as we see it now. Some changes need to be made and we will face those changes with hope for our future. We are not alone as we make these decisions. May God be with us.' *Enid Mann*

**CREATING AND NURTURING COMMUNITY****"Christmas with friends" concert by Ave Choir**

**Saturday, December 23, at 3:00 p.m.** at Richmond Hill United Church. Tickets available at door or online at [avechoir.com](http://avechoir.com).

**Living Presence Ministry**

"The Frost is All Over" A Canadiana Folk Liturgy & House Concert for the Advent Season on **Sunday, December 17 @ 7:00 p.m.** at the Burrow, 1 Mondial Cres., East Gwillimbury. [www.livingpresenceministry.org/frost](http://www.livingpresenceministry.org/frost).

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