

This week at RHUC

Sunday, December 23

10:30 a.m. Service

Monday, December 24 – Christmas Eve

7:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Family Service

10:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Communion Service

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

WORSHIPPING TOGETHER

Minister's message

The day is nearly upon us! In only a few short sleeps it will be Christmas. Over the last few weeks we have been pondering the story of Luke and now we are reaching the climax in first the birth of John (this Sunday) and the birth of Jesus (Christmas Eve). Throughout these weeks there has been a growing sense of clarity. With each new candle flame the sense of light grows. Traditionally light has been associated with wisdom and understanding. There are wonderful gifts that darkness holds for us. In the dark we can quiet our hearts and minds. We can dream and ponder. We can come up with a brand new idea. But when the dawn comes and the light of day slowly grows we begin to see what had been hidden. We get the same sense of growing clarity in Luke's first chapter. Zechariah's doubt contrasts with Mary's wonder. A pre-born John celebrates and once born his father declares without hesitation the name given to him by the angel Gabriel. We have been on the same journey as we have been preparing for Christmas. Who is this child whose birth we celebrate? How are we changed because of him? With only a few days left until Christmas, do you have an answer?

Minister's Office Hours: James will be keep office hours from 1:00 until 5:00 pm on Mondays and Wednesdays each week. Feel free to stop in to see him.

Worship notes

Friday, 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.

Sunday, December 23: We celebrate our last Sunday in Advent, reflecting on Luke 1:57-80, the story of John the Baptist's birth and naming. As Zechariah affirms that his son shall be named John, there is a sense of clarity. This is an invitation for all of us to claim our own personal understanding of who we are celebrating this Christmas and the significance this child holds in our lives.

Monday, December 24 – Christmas Eve

7:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Family Service

10:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Communion Service

Sunday, December 30: We celebrate the First Sunday in the Christmas Season. We will continue pondering the story of Jesus' birth through the words of Luke. We will consider Luke 2:15-19 and Luke 2:22-33. We will take time to ponder these readings through a variety of "stations" set up in the sanctuary.

Announcements: A reminder that if you would like to make an announcement on a Sunday you need to let James know by the Thursday prior. He is able to make the announcement for you. If you would like to make it yourself, it needs to be brief. Please keep to 50 words or less.

A Note about Prayers of the People: As part of our worship services we regularly include what is called "Prayers of the People". These prayers are intended to both prayerfully make a link between the day's scripture and our lives and to raise to awareness the many needs that are in our collective minds and hearts. These are our shared prayer. While this prayer often begins with concerns facing our wider world, we include more local issues, especially the situations facing members of our congregation and those close to them. This means we sometimes include prayers for people who are sick, even naming them if they or a family member has asked us to do so. We never offer the name of someone who is ill without permission. Doing this does not mean we are not also praying for others who are sick. Often they will have asked us not to name them in the service. Sometimes though it may be that we are not aware of the illness or other pastoral need. So if there is a loved one you wish to be prayed for by name, please let us know, with the condition that permission has been given.

2019 Calendar

The 2019 Canadian church calendars "Faith, Hope, and Love" are available at the Welcome Table for \$5.00.

HOSPITALITY & WORKING FOR JUSTICE

Hands & Hearts for Africa

2018 VIRTUAL WALK AROUND AFRICA: Virtual Walk Around Africa: Summer in December in eSwatini

We have walked over 6500 kms and have arrived in Manzini, the second largest city in Swaziland, which is known as "The Hub". Swaziland is an absolute monarchy, presently ruled by King Mswati III who is known as the Ngenyama or Lion of Swaziland. In April 2018 the king celebrated his 50th birthday and 50 years of independence by changing the country's name to eSwatini.

eSwatini is a small country with a big heart. In the various arts and craft markets we visit, we admire batik prints, carved masks and beautiful jewelry. We hear from locals about the amazing Sibebe Rock which is only 11 kms away and is known as the second largest exposed granite dome in the world after Uluru in Australia. If we had a few hours to spare, it would be a lifetime experience to take a guided tour to the top of Sibebe or join a Hogs and Hippos guided walk.

In the heat of a December summer day, we are invited to meet with Tsabile who is a caregiver with SWAPOL, Swaziland Positive Living, and Thandeka, one of her clients. Tsabile greets us and leads us into a cool place for refreshments. Her face lights up as she talks about the work she does for SWAPOL. She is especially passionate about her work with children, offering them support after their relatives die and keeping them in their homes and in school. Encouraged by our conversation, we say goodbye and continue our trek. This time we head to Maseru in Lesotho, less than 500 kms away!

And while Christmas bells ring around the world, we will be continuing our virtual walk for Stephen Lewis Foundation. Please take a moment to remember our African sisters and brothers, their challenges, their resilience and their courage.

Gifts with Vision

We have received the new 2018-2019 alternative gift catalogue for the United Church of Canada. It contains the usual assortment of projects 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 an immediate need, like hunger and shelter; to tackling employment by providing education or small business start-up money; to sending a kit to camp or giving help to the world's displaced people. There are some catalogues on the Welcome Table but you can do everything on the web: www.giftswithvision.ca *This is the alternative way of giving, and giving something that is really needed!* Contact: Donna Smith 905-884-6307

Minute for Mission *Called to be the Church*

Our gifts for Mission & Service support programs that empower women in the developing world. At the Morogoro Women's Training Centre in Dodoma, Tanzania, there is a sign that reads, "Serve God gladly." Morogoro has been a Mission & Service global partner since the centre's creation in 1979. The centre offers a variety of courses, from legal advocacy to agriculture to maternal health. The goal is to empower women to make a better life for themselves, their families, and their communities. Over the past five years, United Church Women have supported the Traditional Birth Attendants program at the centre. Five hundred women have graduated from this program and are now able to assist mothers to give birth safely in communities that often lack a clinic or hospital. Traditional Birth Attendants, or midwives, play a significant role in reducing maternal and infant mortality through pre- and post-natal care and birthing techniques. Mothers and their children are alive thanks to this program and to the vision of the Morogoro Centre. Our ongoing gifts for Mission & Service enable core support for the Morogoro Women's Training Centre.

Living In Right Relations Committee

We're going to take a break from the *Indian Act of 1876*. Instead, this week we're going to delve into the Winter Solstice.

Different Indigenous cultures have unique ways of celebrating and acknowledging the new year. According to Elder Wilfred Buck, in the Cree tradition, the Winter Solstice is an important time for animals and plants to rest. And for people, to replenish their spirit and grieve. It's also a time to honour their ancient sun deity. "The earth beneath and the stars above constitute their holistic world."

The Pleiades constellations are considered sacred by many cultures around the world. They are also referred to as the Seven Sisters (Cree), this star cluster can be seen with the naked eye to the northwest of Taurus the Bull constellation. "Behgonay Geeshik (Anishinabe) or Pakone-Kisik (Cree) is translated into English as the Hole in the Sky through which Sky Woman descended to the Earth."

Traditionally during the long winter nights, storytelling by Elders was a form of entertainment and passing down oral history to those in the community.

(Painting by: Simone McLeod, Sharing stories of Ojig)



For the Plains Cree, the Round Dance is also an activity performed in the winter season once trapping and hunting seasons are over. Based in a healing ceremony and to honour ancestors, it's also performed as a social dance. Traditionally, the hand drums are tuned by the fire, hands are joined and everyone moves as one in circle (usually shuffling to the left) around the drummers and singers - dances are known to go well into the night.

[Sources -<https://www.cbc.ca/news/what-does-the-winter-solstice-mean-in-the-cree-tradition-1.4461274>, <http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/edu/ViewLoitDa.do;jsessionid=34CE519A1D60A6BFD2D5D1A75D765BF3?method=preview&lang=EN&id=5714>, <https://www.nebraskapress.unl.edu/university-of-nebraska-press/9781496200402/>, <https://carleton.ca/indigenous/round-dance/>]

Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School Wish List

[DFC High School Wish List flyer](#)

List is also posted on the Outreach bulletin board.

BUILDING FOR MINISTRY

RHUC Council

The end of 2018 marks the closing of Living Waters Presbytery, as the United Church of Canada reorganizes into a three-court structure consisting of communities of faith, regional councils, and General Council.

For many years, members of RHUC have given their time faithfully in service of Living Waters Presbytery. Council wants to acknowledge and honour the contributions of everyone who has served as Presbytery Representatives on behalf of RHUC – past and present. Thank you for sharing your gifts and your time to strengthen our greater church community.

ENGAGING, CHALLENGING & GROWING OUR FAITH

Bible Study

Advent Bible Study: This coming Advent (Dec. 2 - 24) James will facilitate two Bible Study sessions each week, one at noon on Wednesdays (bring a bag lunch) and one at 6:20 pm on Thursdays. We will explore what the bible tells us about Jesus through each of the birth narratives, including those in the apocrypha (early Christian books that didn't make it into the Bible). We begin on Wednesday, Nov. 28th and on Thursday, Nov. 29th at 6:20 p.m.

H.A.I.R.

H.A.I.R. will resume in 2019. HAIR, the Monday evening study group, is using TED talks and other videos to trigger discussions about ethical questions, the implications of faith in the modern world, and other important issues of our time, such as when to stand up against discrimination, how to make a difference in helping others (effective altruism), environmental challenges, etc. Since each discussion is self-contained it is possible to join us in the chapel any Monday at 7:00 without having to “catch up”. Everyone is welcome to any or all of these fascinating discussions.

Faith Exploration Classes

Are you curious about the teachings of Jesus, especially how we live them out within The United Church of Canada? Do you want to translate what you were taught in Sunday School into an adult understanding? Are you wondering about baptism or considering becoming a member of RHUC through confirmation or transfer from another congregation? Or maybe you are just interested in sharing faith with other adults? Then come to James' office and explore faith with others. The sessions run from now until April in 3 week blocks based on themes. Faith Exploration Classes are at noon on Sunday. Everyone welcome.

Section 2: Who is Jesus?

January 13: Jesus' Life and Ministry

January 20: Jesus' Teaching

January 27: Jesus' Death and Resurrection

Section 3: What does it mean to be church?

February 10: The gift of the Spirit

February 24: Being Church

March 3: How do we worship?

Section 4: Living in Faith

March 17: Living with Respect in Creation

March 24: Living in Service

March 31: Living for Just Relationships

April 7: Living with difficult ethical questions

April 20: Retreat Day

Women's Winter Retreat

Ladies mark your calendars - the **RHUC Women's Winter Retreat** is **Friday February 8 to Sunday February 10, 2019 at Loretto Maryholme in Keswick.**

RHUC Book Club

The RHUC Book Club will meet again on **January 23, 2019 at 7 p.m.** At that time, we will be discussing the novel *The Marriage of Opposites: A Novel Based on the Life of Rachel Pissarro* by Alice Hoffman. "From the New York Times bestselling author of *The Dovekeepers*, *Practical Magic*, and *The Museum of Extraordinary Things*: a forbidden love story set on the tropical island of St. Thomas about the extraordinary woman who gave birth to painter Camille Pissarro—the Father of Impressionism." For more information about the book club, please speak to Sandra Loughton or call the church office at 905-884-1301, Ext. 5 to speak to Deb Fratin, Office Administrator. New members are always welcome!

Shalom Seekers

Shalom Seekers will resume meeting on Monday, January 7 from 9:30-11:30 a.m. in the Chapel. New members are welcome at any time. Please speak to Peg Hiscoke or Sandra Loughton for more details.

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.

CREATING AND NURTURING COMMUNITY

From Sue Foot

This little note is to say, from the bottom of my heart, how much I appreciate the overwhelming outpouring of kindness and compassion, caring and love that everyone has shown following the death of my beloved Chris. It was overwhelming to see so many friends from our church at the Celebration of Life for Chris in October. Everywhere I turned I saw more faces, showing concern and deep friendship. In feeling such deep grief, I was overjoyed to know that you were there with me, sharing in this grief, in this enormous sense of loss. How fortunate I was that you took the time to be with me and my family, for it was like a thousand arms embracing me, sharing your warmth and compassion at such a vulnerable time. To all the Donna's, and Peter, Stewart, Ian, Harry, Wilhelm, Bruce, Doug, Marg Moon, Daphne, Jackie, June, Vince, Adam, Kathy and Rod, Anne and David, Joanne and Bill, and some others whose names I must be omitting, thank you so very much for caring. I have loved reading all your cards and lovely notes as well, checking the mailbox daily and finding wonderful words of sympathy and hope. They have warmed me during the passing days, knowing that Chris is being missed and that I am being cared about. How absolutely heartwarming! It would be a hard day, indeed, to not feel that closeness from our dear friends at this beautiful church and community. Chris and I have been part of RHUC since 1968, and although not being able to be there during the past few years since our move to Mid-town Toronto, we have always kept in touch in one way or another, always knowing what was going on, and visiting from time to time, for both happy and sadder events. Each and every time we were greeted with gentle and caring warmth, fun and laughter as well as tears during the sad times. I know that Chris loved this church through the years from the days of our new babies, nursery school, Sunday School, Children's Choir, our wonderful Couples' Club, various committees, coffee time, the Men's Breakfast, Web Groups, fabulous ministers and Barry and his wonderful music...the sounds of silence, the gorgeous windows, the sun shining in on Sunday mornings, singing, laughing, talking about things, about life, about the future, about God's presence. It has always been deeply nurturing to Chris and to me and our family. I am deeply grateful to everyone in this church with such a Generous Spirit.

With much love,
Sue Foot, and daughters Erin and Angie

To unsubscribe, please write to: office@rhuc.org, and put "unsubscribe" in the subject line. Published by Deb Fratin. Please submit notices by noon on Wednesday.