

This week at a glance

Sunday, December 24th – 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.

Monday, December 25th – Merry Christmas!

Sunday, December 31st

10:30 a.m. Service

Monday, January 1st – Happy New Year!

Monday, December 25 – January 2 – office closed

WORSHIPPING TOGETHER

Worship

Sunday, December 24th – Christmas Eve

10:30 a.m. This coming Sunday is a humdinger. The morning it is the Fourth Sunday of Advent and then come evening we shift to Christmas Eve with 7:00 pm and 10:00 pm services. That being said there is one scripture narrative that holds the whole day together - Luke 2:1-16. In the morning we will zero in on just the first half of the story: Mary and Joseph going to Bethlehem where Jesus is born. The focus is on there being "no room." What is the meaning of that for us? How do we make room for Jesus' arrival? Do we even need to?

7:00 p.m. This service is family focussed with a Christmas play entitled "Gift of the Socks" - as a dad tries to discover the true meaning of Christmas.

10:00 p.m. The service is our traditional and reflective candlelight and communion service.

Sun., December 31st – 1st 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.

Minister's Message

"It's the most wonderful time of the year!" That's what the song tells us. It's supposed to be the most wonderful time because of "kids jingle belling" and "carolling out in the snow" as "friends come to call". It is those things but for me what makes it wonderful is the simple message of the Incarnation, that God's love and life are revealed in a baby born in a manger. God revealed in a small child rather than a powerful ruler changes everything. It reminds me that God is revealed wherever I look. Not just in the majestic, awe-inspiring - and distant, but also the small, the vulnerable, the near at hand. Which means God's love and life can be present in me too. That's a wonderful realization. I don't need to look too far to experience God's loving heart. I need only look within. Christmas blessings to you all.

It's office moving week

Over Christmas week James will be moving down the hall a bit to Linda's former office. This will bring him a bit closer into the thick of things and also makes his present office available for possible rentals.

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

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 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 support rebuilding after conflicts and natural disasters. Let us hear a story from Guatemala. The Nebaj region of rural Guatemala suffered through three decades of civil war that ended in 1996. Here, the Guatemala Conference of Evangelical Churches (CIEDEG) is training more than 400 Indigenous women in human rights, citizen participation, and economic empowerment through farming. The women have seen changes since the training. Their confidence has grown; they are no longer afraid to voice their opinion and some have even run for political office. Training encourages women to not just know their rights but also to exercise them. Says Veronica Gomez, CIEDEG's Gender Equality Program Coordinator, "Not only do they have a voice, but they also have a vote." The agricultural development project has reduced malnutrition in the community's children and provided a new source of income for families. CIEDEG organizes local women into groups and provides each with seeds and materials for a greenhouse. Through these small cooperatives, the formerly displaced communities are becoming self-sufficient. We sing thanksgiving that, through Mission & Service, communities are able to rebuild and experience peace! 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 o 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

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 collected for First Nations Teens!

Thank you for your very generous donations! Many, many coats have been collected. **Help is now needed with the sorting of items collected.** Please call or email Kathy McBey if you can help out next week at (647) 458-2717 or kathryn.mcbey@gmail.com.

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 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**Women's Winter Retreat - 2018**

This will be **RHUC's eighth annual Women's Winter Retreat at Loretto Maryholme**: www.lorettomaryholme.ca - a beautiful estate home on the shore of Lake Simcoe, just outside Keswick. This location is nice and close, about a 45 min. drive from the church. We gather for a program, with group and individual time, to discuss and reflect about our faith and we get to know others. And we eat and have fun also! Sitting at a warm fireplace or going for a walk in the snow brings us relaxation and rejuvenation. Date for 2018 is **evening Friday January 26th to afternoon Sunday January 28th**. Some come for the two nights, some for one night and some for Saturday only. The cost for accommodation and food for two nights is \$120; for one night \$60; and for the day only is \$35. For further information contact Donna Smith, 905-884-6307. **All women are warmly welcome to come!**

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.

BUILDING FOR MINISTRY

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.

CREATING AND NURTURING COMMUNITY

Dementia friendly church

Dementia friendly church hymn sing and service for caregivers and their loved ones.

Where: St. Mary's Anglican Church, 10030 Yonge St., Richmond Hill

Time: Fridays at 1:00 p.m.

When: starting Dec. 1, 2017

For more information call 905-876-8666

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.