



Worship services in December

Here is list of the upcoming services for the month of December:

December 1- White Gift Sunday- please bring a gift wrapped in white paper which will be donated to one of the agencies we support. Communion will be served in the pews.

December 8- Carols and Lessons presented by the senior choir. Please invite your family and friends to attend.

December 15- Worship service

December 22- Worship service and Baptism

December 24- Family service at 7:00 pm. Candlelight communion service at 11:15 pm.

December 29- Ruth Olley will lead us in worship. Pat Beach will provide her ministry of music at the piano.

Special Christmas Music

St. Paul's Senior Choir is presenting its Carols and Lessons December 8, 2019 during the 10:30 am service. This year's music includes a double trio: soloists; the full choir; as well as congregational participation. Plan to come with your family, friends and neighbours!

This uplifting music will help you prepare for a joyous Christmas season!



Christmas Carols During Advent

As is our tradition at St. Paul's, we will be singing your favorite Christmas Carols before the morning service, from 10:25 - 10:35 am starting December 1, 2019.

(We also sing Carols on Christmas Eve from 6:45 -7:00 pm) Come with your favorite title in mind, or arrive a few minutes early to find your favorite in Voices United 35 – 78 and 91.

Why not invite a friend who is looking for an opportunity to sing carols and get in the mood for Christmas?!

MINISTER'S MESSAGE**Happy Advent!**

I have to confess that Advent is my favorite season of the Christian year. Even more than Christmas or Easter, I look forward to Advent. At this point you may be asking yourself what I could possibly love so much about Advent. After all this is a stressful and difficult season for most of us as family, cultural and spiritual expectations combine to make it seem as if there is a mountain of tasks to be completed, a wave of expectations to meet and not enough time to accomplish everything in. I'll admit that I'm as prone to this feeling as anyone else is.

Even in the church we talk about Advent as a season of preparation, giving the perception that in addition to all of the other commitments we have, we're somehow supposed to make time for a giant spiritual to-do list if we're are to have a proper Christmas.

I wonder if there's a more helpful way to think of Advent and its spiritual meaning. Advent is a season of preparation, but sometimes preparation means letting go of or getting rid of things. Traditions and rituals are precious things but sometimes the best thing is to let them go. Perhaps its time to create a new tradition that is better suited to your life now. For example, in my own life, putting up the Christmas tree has become optional. Some years it goes up and gets decorated, some years I don't have the time, or the energy and it doesn't. Instead, every year I set out my Advent wreath and my Nativity Scenes (at this point I have three) and hang little decorations around my apartment. It takes less time and energy and my home still looks festive and special. As new tradition in my life it's working well.

Included with this Epistle are some resources from the United Church to help you connect with God this Advent. It includes three different prayer resources, and an Advent Calendar with a question to reflect on each day. It is my hope that you will find them helpful as you journey through Advent.

I hope that as you experience Advent this year, you'll be able to let go of those things that no longer serve you and create new traditions that help you to wait more fully for the birth of Christ. I hope that you'll have time to experience the holiness of quiet waiting, of sitting with the anticipation of the fulfillment of God's promise on Christmas Day and that you will find yourself blessed as you do so.

Rev. Cordelia



⁴ So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them

Get ready for Christ(mas)!

Advent
Calendar 2019

For people seeking a moment of rest... Spend time getting ready for Christ(mas) by reflecting on a different question each day. You may want to set a timer from anywhere between 1 to 10 minutes to help structure your waiting and preparing time.

1 Light the 1 st Advent candle, giving thanks for Jesus our Hope  [1st Sunday in Advent]	2 Who do you say Jesus is? Brainstorm different names for Jesus. [International day for the Abolition of Slavery]	3 Who might your home or church be inaccessible to? What could you do to make your space more welcoming? [Disability Awareness Day]	4 How do you prepare for a special guest? How does being prepared show care?	5 What are your favourite words of wisdom?	6 What can you do to help stop violence? [National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women]	7 What is the difference between wisdom and knowledge? How do you gain wisdom?
8 Light the 2 nd Advent candle, giving thanks for Jesus, Prince of Peace  [2nd Sunday in Advent]	9 Who does your community say Jesus is? How would your family and friends describe Jesus?	10 What are human rights? How can you help to protect the rights of others? [Human Rights Day]	11 Who has helped you to grow? How?	12 Who do you trust to lead you? Why?	13 What can you do to show your support to a loved one?	14 What does the media (TV, music, etc.) say about Jesus? Do you agree or disagree with what they teach?
15 Light the 3 rd Advent candle, giving thanks for Jesus, Joy of the World  [3rd Sunday in Advent]	16 What are signs of new life and growth in your life?	17 Who has helped you to unlock a mystery or puzzle? How?	18 How would you prepare if Jesus and the Holy Family were guests in your home? [World Migrant Day]	19 What are your favorite images and symbols for Jesus?	20 Does Jesus bring hope into your life? How?	21 What gifts are always with us?
22 Light the 4 th Advent candle, giving thanks for Jesus, Love made known  [4th Sunday in Advent]	23 What does the Bible say about Jesus? What is your favourite description of Jesus?	24 When do you feel closest to Jesus?	25 What gifts do you bring to Jesus today?			

For more ideas visit
united-church.ca
search "advent unwrapped"



FINANCE COMMITTEE*Financially Speaking : Update, October 2019*

Donations From All Sources	October	YTD
What We Needed (from all sources)	\$18,424	160,600
Total We Received (including from the Building Fund)	13,916	147,105
What We Spent	15,189	196,065
Surplus / Shortfall (Total Received less What We Spent)	-1,272	-48,960
M&S Givings	1,420	\$12,163
Capital Fund Donations	576	7,746

October was a negative month mostly because our annual Fall dinner fundraiser was postponed until November (which we all know was a resounding success). On the surface our year-to-date numbers look discouraging but, keep in mind that we have spent over \$31,000 in Capital repairs to our building. These expenses were not anticipated and thus not budgeted for. If you take into consideration those Capital expenses, our year-to-date financial position is only -\$17,572 which is much better than the -\$18,139 originally projected.

I know that we have had a lot of expenses this year. These expenses have been necessary to keep our building a safe place for everyone who enters it.

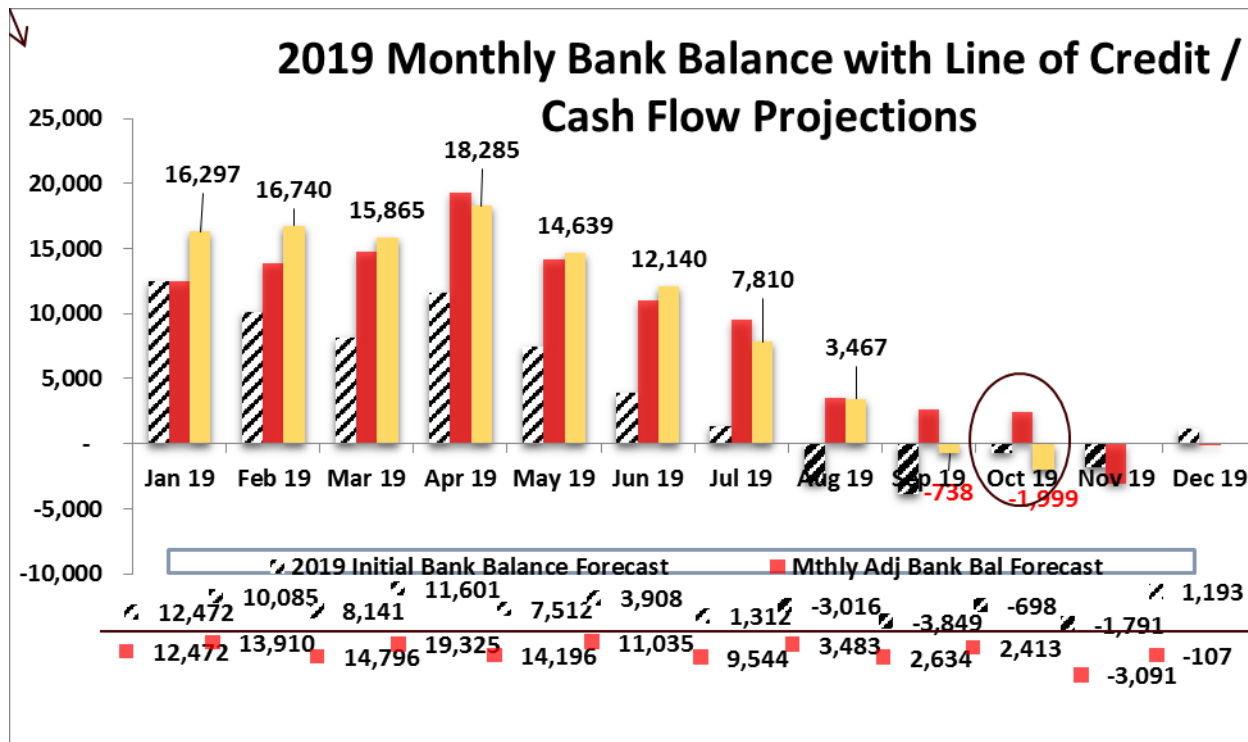
You will all know by now that our new roof has been installed. To pay for this major project, we borrowed \$19,000 from the Church Extension Council. One way we are raising funds to repay this loan is to sell bundles of roof shingles for \$60 per bundle. Thanks to you, we have sold over 150 bundles so far, raising over \$9,200 to date. Have you bought your bundle yet?

As you know, stewardship is rendered in many forms whether as gifts of time, talents and skills, or treasure. Your gifts are appreciated. As always, your gifts will help St. Paul's to continue to be a place for everyone to reach out to for worship and prayer, for comfort, for social interaction, and for help.

Please look at the chart below. It is a projection of what our 2019 year-end bank balance could be if all our budget targets are met. It also shows that in the months of September - November, our initial forecast was that we could potentially have a negative bank balance and at the end of October, our bank balance was -\$1,999.

If the month of November is a positive one financially, we will not have the negative bank balance at the end of November that our forecast currently suggests. Our December 2019 bank balance could be a positive number. This number can and will change monthly. We monitor this chart regularly and share it with you continually so that you can see how we are doing financially.

FINANCE COMMITTEE (con't)



If anyone has any comments or simply just wishes to better understand this graph's meaning and how this graph works, please contact Robert Hunt at 416 458 5888. All questions are welcome.

Your Finance Committee

CONGREGATION CONNECTIONS

Christmas Families

This year we will continue the practice of providing our Christmas Families with Presidents Choice gift cards instead of buying groceries. While the families are grateful for any assistance we can give them, the gift cards are preferred.

Last year we helped 6 families and in order to cover the cost of the groceries we provided in the past we will need a President's Choice gift card of \$100.00 for each family. I will also purchase Walmart gift cards so that parents can leave a surprise from Santa under the tree Christmas morning.

Beginning November 17, 2019 you will find specially labelled red envelopes in the pew racks. You can leave cash or a cheque, payable to St Paul's United Church with "Christmas Families" on the memo line in the red envelope and place it on the offering plate or drop off your donation to the office. If you do not find a red envelope in your pew rack then just use one of the regular envelopes and mark it Christmas Families.

The last day to make a contribution will be December 8, 2019

If you have any questions or concerns please contact me in the office 905 683 4740.

The Giving Tree

St. Paul's Mitten Tree has been renamed to be the ***Giving Tree***.

The tree will be set up set up in the Narthex and will ready to be decorated with hats, scarfs, mittens and gloves of all sizes. They can be handmade or purchased. Some of the clothing items left on the tree will be included with the Gift Cards for our Christmas Families, the rest will be kept for our clients of the Open Cupboard.

You will also find a basket under the tree where you can donate personal hygiene products so we can begin to stock the Open Cupboard. Items we are looking for include: toothpaste, tooth brushes, bar soap, shampoo, hair brushes, combs, feminine hygiene products, diapers, etc. All these items will be distributed through the Open Cupboard

If you have any questions or concerns please contact me in the office 905 683 4740.

Catharine Ottawa

Save the date

On Sunday, January 12, 2020 the Worship and Music committee is hosting our annual event, Soups, Song and Sweets in the Gathering Place at noon. Please mark this date on your calendar and plan to attend. Donations of soup and sweets are gratefully accepted.





Family Prayers and Blessings

Traditional Prayers

Here are some well-loved prayers you can learn and say as a family to support your Advent journey.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, * who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil:

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.

*or Creator

The Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

A Blessing

May God bless you and keep you.
May God's face shine upon you
and be gracious to you.
May God look upon you with kindness and give you peace.
(Numbers 6:24–26)

Table Grace

For food in a world where many are in hunger;
For faith in a world where many are in fear;
For friends in a world where many are alone,
We give you humble thanks, O Lord.

CHURCH COUNCIL

Update from Council – Moving Forward with our Strategic Plan!

With your support, the St. Paul's United Church (SPUC) DRAFT Strategic Plan which is focused on three streams - Spiritual Life, Programs and Activities, and Financial and Environmental Health - is continuing to be implemented.

Below are some updates on the milestones that we collectively set for SPUC when the DRAFT Plan was reviewed by the congregation in June 2019:

Spiritual Life:

- The September 2019 timeline for introducing the **new narrative lectionary** was met and Reverend Cordelia continues to bring the word of God to us each Sunday using this new approach.
 - Work will begin on **expanding our Christian Education program** in January and your feedback is invited and can be shared with Reverend Cordelia.
- In March of next year a **new Order of Worship** will be rolled out.

Programs and Activities:

- Our goal of **becoming a placement site for college and/or university interns** was put on hold in the fall based on our capacity to support these individuals but we will revisit it in the new year.
- We have obtained an enhanced licence that will allow us to begin **posting music from our Sunday worship services on our website!!** Watch for an announcement directing you to the Worship page (see <https://stpaulsajax.org/worship/>) when this new feature is added to the future recordings.
- Sharon and Renzo Castellarin and Catharine and Gord Ottaway have been doing an outstanding job refreshing and rejuvenating our church building and **the new information hub** in the rechristened Peter Pos Christian Resource Centre (previously the Chapel space) will be available in the new year.
- Thank you to everyone who has been using the Invitation Posters (see <https://stpaulsajax.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/poster.pdf>) as a way of **spreading the word about SPUC**. Inviting people to attend our Christmas services is another great way to “market” ourselves. Please head to the calendar (see <https://stpaulsajax.org/calendar/>) for all the dates and times.
- A big thank you to Jennifer Cree who is leading a team to update SPUC's history book as we get ready to **celebrate our 70th anniversary in March**. If you are interested in helping to organize our anniversary celebrations, please speak to Katie Cronin-Wood or send an email to SPUCAjax@gmail.com.
- Our June 2020 goal to **initiate food and fellowship outreach programs to the broader community** is a significant part of our strategic plan. The work currently underway to launch the Open Cupboard in the new year, will form a strong foundation for that goal. Susan Reed and her committee are doing an outstanding job in getting that new program up and running.

Financial and Environmental Health

- Thank you to everyone for your cooperation with the **resigning and relocation of the entrances to the building**. It has been positively received by our partners, including Sunshine Nursery School, and has provided a much safer environment for staff and visitors.

CHURCH COUNCIL (con't)

- The **East Central Ontario Regional Council of the United Church of Canada** came into existence on January 1, 2019. “Formerly known as Regional Council 11, ECORC is 1 of 16 Regional Councils of the United Church of Canada and it is a decision-making body responsible to serve and support Communities of Faith within its bounds and provide necessary oversight.” (see <https://ecorcuccan.ca/>). This includes SPUC. Through Reverend Cordelia and Bill Sheaves we are continuing to work with ECORC as it develops its role. This will include seeking their approval of a **new Governance Structure for SPUC** which Council will be bringing forward for the congregation’s review and approval in February 2020.
- The generosity of everyone at SPUC is boundless as we respond to the ongoing financial needs of our church. Whether it’s the “Buy a Bundle” campaign, attending fundraising events, submitting Letters of Intention during the Stewardship campaign, or making your weekly donations to the general fund, the capital fund or Mission and Service, our financial contributions help to ensure that we are able to live out our mission as “we gather to experience, show and share the difference God’s love in Christ makes in our lives (and) we strive to be a people growing spiritually, while reaching out to others in response to Jesus Christ.”
- Through Dave Eagleson’s leadership, and with the support of a group of dedicated volunteers, we weathered (no pun intended) **the water challenges in the basement**. Discussions are continuing with the Town, the Region and the developers next door on requirements to install a back flow valve and ensure that water continues to drain away from our property during a heavy rain. The driveway realignment has now been deferred to the spring.
- The Finance Committee is working with all church committees to develop the 2020 Budget for the congregation’s review in February. This will include a **capital repairs priorities forecast based on recommendations from the LEAP Committee** and other needs that have arisen in the meantime.

Please speak to any member of Council if you have any questions about these updates. Council holds its meeting the first Sunday of the month following worship and everyone is invited to attend.

Minutes from the Council meetings are posted on a Google drive (see https://drive.google.com/open?id=1H2uKWPuCLZK_UIK5sCcHdjTo9Mbcpedv).

Submitted on behalf of Council by

Katie Cronin-Wood,
Chair



Activity Sheet: Names for Jesus

For people looking for new ways to pray...

Jesus Jar: Have a jar with 25 different names for Jesus. Every day, take out a different name and use that name for Jesus in your prayer. Use the list below, or add your own names for Jesus.

Counsellor	Prince of Peace	Anchor
Friend	Christ	Guide
Brother/ Sibling	The Chosen One	Gardener
Wise One	Emmanuel	Companion
Lord	Ruler	Cosmic Christ
Leader	King	Mary's Son
Dayspring/ Morning Star	Teacher	Beloved
Rod of Jesse	Healer	
Desire of Nations	Prophet	

UCW

On Tuesday, December 17, 2019, at 1:00 pm, the UCW will meet for our monthly meeting in the Fellowship Room. Karen Strong will provide the Christmas Devotion and Program which possibly will be encircled by Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love

Members will be bringing homemade cookies to share with each other and shut-ins, the latter being another UCW outreach within the Church Family.



Everyone is cordially invited to join us for Christmas friendship. If anyone needs a ride, please call Valerie at 905-683-8798,

MEN'S GROUP

The Men's Group will meet for breakfast on Saturday, December 14, 2019, at 8:00 am in the Gathering Place. The invitation is open to all men. Attend for the first time and enjoy a free breakfast.

The 4 C's will be there

Caffeine
Calories
Cholesterol
Camaraderie

Come to make the 5th and 6th C

Christmas
Chorus

Now sing altogether "Have a Holly, Jolly Christmas"

CONGREGATION CONNECTIONS

Thank you! Thank you! Thank You! and Thank you Again.

The 2019 Bazaar was a big success. I cannot say thank you enough to everyone that helped out by making food, held a convenor position or volunteered the day before and the day of the bazaar. Without everyone's help, the bazaar wouldn't be possible.

Our History

I am looking for volunteers to help with the compiling of St. Paul's next decade. If you are interested, please contact me at 905-686-4467. Thank you to those who have already volunteered their services.

Jennifer Cree

CONGREGATION CONNECTIONS

Coat Drive

Ontario Shores Foundation for Mental Health is holding their Annual Coat Drive to help spread the warmth for patients during the winter months and is asking you to please donate your gently used coat.

What they need:

- New or gently used coats (please ensure there are no tears and that the zipper is working)
- Male and female coats
- Size large or bigger
- Hats, gloves and scarves also needed

If you can help please drop your items off at the church during office hours and my daughter and I will deliver them. Last day to donate is December 12, 2019.

Catharine Ottaway

Thank you



Thank you all for the get well cards, phone calls, emails, prayers, etc. received after my recent surgery.

Sincere appreciation for the concern.

Doris

Thank You

On behalf of the Envelope Steward:

For all those who returned their Letters of Intention - 42 households in total. Thank you for your declaration of ongoing support of St Paul's. Thanks are also due to all the people who attend St Paul's and call it your church home. Your continuing support is greatly appreciated.

On behalf of the Fall Fundraiser event:

Thank you to all the diners and the shoppers who made this event such a success.

A hearty thanks also goes to all the game and auction donors for your great generosity. Your support is priceless. I think all can join in saluting the cast, choir and sound crew of our SPUC Gospel Players for the donation of their time and talents in making this year's performance so great.

We must not fail to thank the volunteers for all their work in the kitchen, in the setting up and cleaning up. These were handled so well that the evening could proceed without a hitch.

Last but not least were the members of this year's fund raising team who coped with alternative dates and a short time frame: Robert, Wendy, David, Susan, Catharine, Sharon, Lois and Katie. Their creativity hard work and generosity of time and spirit made this one of the best events to date. It was a pleasure to be part of this group.

Submitted by

Dorothy Wilkins



The Hours of Christmas Day

Praying the Hours is an ancient tradition and spiritual practice offered to hallow each day. Keeping the Hours began as prayers of the people. The ordinary workday was interspersed with times of prayer. Today it is mostly monks who follow fixed-hour prayers. We reclaim this practice in these Hours of Christmas Day. As you pray, know you are together in Spirit with others who join you in praying these Hours of Christmas Day.

You may choose to read these during three pauses in the day (upon waking, during a meal, and end of day), or all at once.

AWAKENING

Read: John 1:1-5

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” v.1

We wake today to a Divine Love present from the beginning. It is Love present in the Great Radiance of the universe. It is Love always expanding. It is Love born in human shape in the Little One of Bethlehem. It is Love born again. It is Love born today. Each day. Love poured down, Love surrounding, Love among us, Love within is. It is gift. So take a breath. Look East. As the sun rises on this day, pray softly: Awake, my soul, I will awake and praise the Gift given this day.

Act of Thanks: With the eyes of your heart open, watch for gifts that come into your day unwrapped.

FEASTING

Read: Luke 2:1-14

“And this shall be a sign to you; You shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.” v.12

Lying in a manger! I like to imagine the graciousness of the cow that shared her feed trough to cradle the baby! This is a day for festival and feasting. At the breakfast or dinner table as you gather with family or friends, or on your own, let's make a sign of gratitude. You might want to light a candle and sing a verse of “Joy to the World”, or “Away in a Manger.” We bless our food and give thanks for the joy of this day.

Sign of Thanks: The child lying in a manger was a sign to the shepherds. We learn sign language to say, “Bless this food.” You might want to learn this sign to use at your feast. There are three parts to “Bless this food.”

- With one hand, make the sign of the cross like you are blessing people;
- Bring your hands together then move them from meeting together to apart with open palms and fingers pointed downward at the food before you;
- With your right hand open, bring index and thumb together (which is the letter “F” for food) and scoop up toward mouth over centered flat left palm up.¹

Or you can simply say “thank you” by moving your hand from your mouth forward to display a flat palm.

TREASURING

Read: Luke 2:15-20

“But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.” v.19

Many of you labour today to make a happy Christmas for your family, and for your self. It is a day rich in challenging dynamics, and hopefully, touched with moments to savour. When you come to the end of the day, it is good to take a centering breath and gently hold the day like brave and gentle Mary, in a time of reflection and letting go. You might want to light a candle or enjoy the glow of Christmas lights.

Act of Thanks: Here are some questions for pondering in your heart. What are the blessings I treasure this day? What are the feelings I acknowledge and let go of? Take your time. Now offer your pondering in the name of Love.

With children, everyone can offer a highlight and a lowlight of the day. Highlights are something you are grateful for, and a lowlight is something you are not so grateful for. Listen to one another without comment. When everyone shares, say Amen.

ST. PAUL'S UNITED CHURCH

the church with the open arms



St. Paul's United Church

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We're on the web!

www.stpaulsajax.org

The next *Epistle* will be issued on or about December 27, 2019

DEADLINE for articles is December 20, 2019

Please send articles to Wendy Mason at goosemason@yahoo.ca

JOIN WITH US TO WORSHIP AND PRAISE GOD.

Sunday Worship - 10:30 am

Wheelchair Accessible - Hearing Assistance

Sunday School and Nursery Care available during Sunday Worship.

Fellowship and coffee time follows every worship service.

Holy Communion is served on the first Sunday of the month.

Baptisms and Weddings may be arranged by calling the Church Office.

Meeting Space is available for booking.

Our office is open weekdays from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm.

Minister: the Rev. Cordelia Karpenko

Office Administrator: Catharine Ottaway

Music Director: Lois Craig

We come to experience, show and share the difference God's love in Christ makes in our lives. We strive to be a people growing spiritually while reaching out to others in response to Jesus Christ.