

ST. ANDREW'S UNITED CHURCH

A Christmas Message from Rev. Charlene

There's a song which refers to Christmas as "the most wonderful time of the year." And for many of us, it is. We delight in the festive lights and decorations; our calendar fills with dates for concerts, social gatherings and celebrations; the carols make us both joyful and wistful as we sing them off by heart; we frantically shop, choosing gifts that are 'just right' for those dear to us; the aromas from the kitchen rival the taste of favorite dishes or sweets which are part of our family Christmas traditions. And in the hustle and bustle, we sometimes forget that Jesus is the "reason for the season."



At the same time, these days leading up to Christmas are sad and difficult for many. There are aching memories of loved ones who have died; some are dealing with health challenges and sickness, of their own or a family member; many are stressed over paying bills and the pressure to spend; all around us people feel the effects of poverty, homelessness, addiction, tragedy, unemployment. And in the worry, pain, fear, and sadness, it is easy to lose sight of the gift of Emmanuel, God-with-us. We lose the real meaning of this season which celebrates God's coming alongside us, in the child of Bethlehem, because God's desire is that we might more fully know the essence of who God is. For many, it is difficult to feel the warmth and love of that presence which is God's promise for all people in all times and places.

The words of Taylor Caldwell come to mind: *"I am not alone at all, I thought. I was never alone at all. And that, of course, is the message of Christmas. We are never alone. Not when the night is darkest, the wind coldest, the world seemingly most indifferent. For this is still the time God chooses."*

My friends, THIS IS THE TIME and WE ARE THE PEOPLE GOD CHOOSES to shine light, to share love, to make a difference in the lives of people around us. And so, I thank you for your generosity to the Mitten Tree and the Christmas Hampers, to the Community Kitchen, to the regular offering which enables support and pastoral care with those who need it. And I thank you for your ongoing commitment to the life of faith and to the work and witness of this congregation. On behalf of my husband, John and the St. Andrew's United Church Council, I extend sincere wishes to all for peace, joy and love at Christmas and always. - Rev. Charlene



Advent Services

Dec. 2 – Advent 1 *Memory Wreath Dedication & White Gift Service*

Dec. 9 – Advent 2

Dec. 16 – Advent 3 *CGIT Vesper Service @11 a.m.*

Dec. 23 – Advent 4 with *Christmas Communion*

Dec. 24 – *Christmas Eve Candlelight Service @ 7 p.m.*

Dec. 30 – *Sunday after Christmas*

Dec. 31 – *Pot Luck Social Gathering & "Watchnight Service" to see in the New Year @ 7 p.m.*

White Gift Service

The service will include a dramatic presentation by the Sunday school entitled "**The Lady in the Box**". On the Sunday prior to the service, White Gift envelopes will be made available to the congregation. White Gift envelopes will also be on the tables at the back of the sanctuary on December 2nd.

CGIT Vesper Service

The CGIT Alumni will present the 2018 Vesper service entitled "**Christmas Every Day**" at the morning service on Dec. 16th. A special offering will be used to support the work of the CGIT throughout the Maritimes. Envelopes will be available on the Sunday prior to the Vesper service.



The Blessing

My wife invited some people to Christmas dinner. At the table, she turned to our six-year-old daughter and said, "Would you like to say the blessing?" I wouldn't know what to say," she replied. "Just say what you hear Mommy say," my wife said. Our daughter bowed her head and said: "Dear Lord, why on earth did I invite all these people to dinner?"





Food items are needed for the **Christmas Hampers** as listed in the bulletin. Please put your donations downstairs on the designated table each Sunday.

And don't forget to trim the **Mitten Tree** with mittens, scarves, socks, and personal care items. Your gifts will be used to help fill the Christmas hampers.



Loonie Sock Fellowship

Women of the congregation are invited to the UCW's annual Loonie Sock Fellowship on Saturday, December 1st, beginning at 10 a.m. Enjoy a morning of Christmas fun and refreshments. And don't forget to bring your Loonie Sock filled with loonies. (\$1 for each month of the year = \$12.) Hope you will join us!

How much did Santa pay for his sleigh?
Nothing. It was on the house!

What do you call an elf wearing ear muffs?
Anything you want. He can't hear you.

What's every parent's favorite Christmas carol?
Silent Night



All I need to know I learned from a snowman

- * It's okay if you're a little bottom heavy.
- * Hold your ground, even if the heat is on.
- * Wearing white is always appropriate.
- * Winter is the best of the four seasons.
- * There's nothing better than a foul weather friend.
- * The key to life is to be a jolly, happy soul.
- * We're all made up of mostly water.
- * You know you've made it when they write a song about you.
- * Don't get too much sun.
- * It's embarrassing when you can't look down and see your feet.
- * It's fun to hang out in your front yard.
- * There's no stopping you once you're on a roll.

~ Unknown ~



The Christmas Letter

Ruth went to her mail box on Christmas Eve, and there was only one letter. She picked it up and looked at it before opening, but then she looked at the envelope again. There was no stamp, no postmark, only her name and address. She read the letter:

Dear Ruth: I'm going to be in your neighborhood this Christmas and I'd like to stop by for a visit. Love Always, Jesus

Ruth's hands were shaking as she placed the letter on the table. "Why would the Lord want to visit me? I'm nobody special. I don't have anything to offer." With that thought, Ruth remembered her empty kitchen cabinets. "Oh my goodness, I really don't have anything to offer. It's Christmas Eve and the stores will be closing. I'll have to run out and buy something for dinner right away." She reached for her purse and counted out its contents. Five dollars and forty cents. "Well, I can get some bread and cold cuts, at least." She threw on her coat and hurried out the door. A loaf of French bread, a half-pound of sliced turkey, and a carton of milk...leaving Ruth with twelve cents to last her until next week. Nonetheless, she felt good as she headed home, her meager offerings of a Christmas dinner tucked under her arm.

"Hey lady, can you help us?" Ruth had been so absorbed in her dinner plans, she hadn't even noticed two figures huddled in the alleyway. A man and a woman, both of them dressed in little more than rags. "Look lady, I ain't got a job, and my wife and I have been living on the street, and, it's getting cold and we're hungry and, well, it's Christmas Eve, if you could help us, lady, we'd really appreciate it."

Ruth looked at them both. "Sir, I'd like to help you, but I'm a poor woman myself. All I have is a few cold cuts and some bread, and I'm having an important guest for Christmas and I was planning on serving that to Him."

"Yeah, well, okay lady, I understand. Thanks anyway". The man and woman turned and headed back into the alley as a gentle snow began to fall. As she watched them leave, Ruth felt a familiar twinge in her heart. "Sir, wait! Look, why don't you take this food. I'll figure out something else to serve my guest." She handed the man her grocery bag. "Thank you, lady. Thank you very much!"

Ruth could see now that the woman was shivering. "You know, I've got another coat at home. Here, why don't you take this one." Ruth unbuttoned her jacket and slipped it over the woman's shoulders. Then smiling, she turned and walked back to the street without her coat and with nothing to serve her guest. Ruth was chilled by the time she reached her front door, and worried too. The Lord was coming to visit and she didn't have anything to offer Him. She fumbled through her purse for the door key. But as she did, she noticed another envelope in her mailbox. "That's odd. The mailman doesn't usually deliver on Christmas Eve." She took the envelope out of the box and opened it.

Dear Ruth: It was so good to see you again. Thank you for the lovely Christmas dinner. And thank you, too, for the beautiful coat. Love Always, Jesus

The air was still cold, and the snow was falling even harder, but even without her coat, Ruth no longer noticed.

– *Author Unknown*