St. Paul's Christmas 2023

A publication of St. Paul's United Church
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807-345-5864

Dec 2 – 1 pm - Decorate the sanctuary

Dec 2 – Intercultural 'Prayers for Peace'
with the African Choir
4:00 – 5:00 pm in Lunan Hall

Dec 3 – Advent 1 - HOPE 10:30 am

Dec 8 & 9 TBSO Messiah Concert 7:30 pm

Dec 10 – Advent 2 - PEACE 10:30 am
Silver Sound Choir Concert – 2 pm

Dec 17 – Advent 3 - JOY 10:30 am
White Gift Sunday; Once Upon a Manger
(a short drama)

Dec 21 – The Longest Night Service
At 6:00 pm

Dec 24 – Advent 4 - LOVE 10:30 am

Dec 24 – Christmas Eve - 7 pm
Candlelight Family Service; Drama;
Joint Choirs & Martin Blanchet Jazz Quintet

– Christmas Eve - 11 pm
Candlelight Communion Service

Dec 31 – Worship Around the Table
in Lunan Hall
Potluck Breakfast - 9:30 am
Worship at the tables - 10:30 am

A Message from our Board Chair

Dear Friends,

What a fall it has been! The church has been a hive of activity: we hit the fall with feet on the ground and running. This began with the wonderful day at Camp Duncan.

The Communications Committee hosted a Club/Committee Day, with committees showcasing what they do and signup sheets for those interested in joining. We had folks sign up for committees aplenty! The beautiful posters let us know what each committee does, and it was helpful for committees to showcase the work they are doing.

The Board hosted Homecoming and what a weekend it was! Celebrating 150 years is remarkable and we did it in style. We had displays throughout the church, photos both old and new to look at, tours of the church by Bill Everitt, the African choir, a musical evening hosted by Diana, a ham dinner, and I do not think anyone will forget the 150-inch cake! A special service was held on Sunday, followed by a concert. *Wow!*

We had a meal to celebrate Rev. Desire becoming a United Church Minister. Deb made a delicious soup, and more than one person told me they had two bowls!

The tinfoil blankets have made the news and a thank you note was received for providing them to the homeless. *Keep saving the chip bags.*

A huge thank you to Doreen Everitt for this incredible project.

Doreen Everitt has organized members of the congregation to cook meals for our takeout Sunday. The Kitchen Committee sells these and are very pleased with the sales of these delicious meals.

In spite of the lack of snow we had a successful Christmas Tea. We are very grateful for the baking, those who helped and all those who came to the tea. I love the Christmas Tea, when the church is a hive of activity and we see old and new friends catching up making sandwiches, helping decorate the tearoom, and selling food.

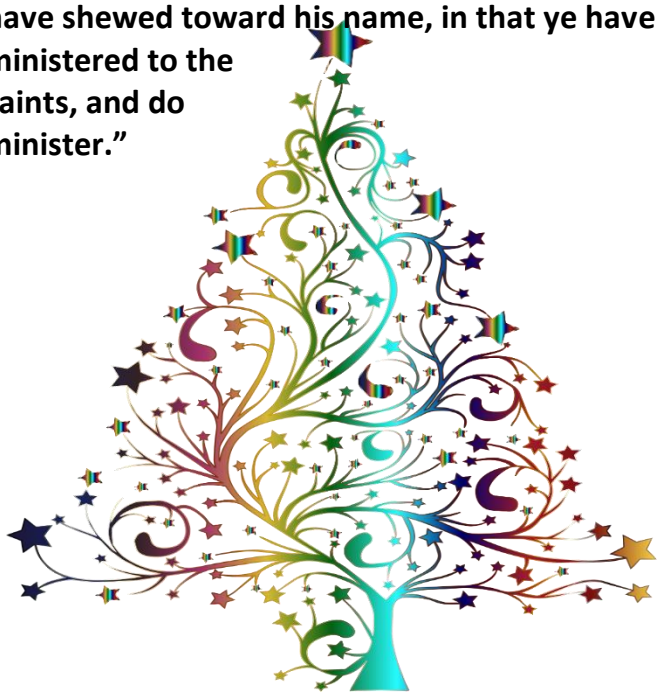
As the Christmas season approaches, we have much to be grateful for, we are a vibrant church with a strong sense of family. The Worship Committee has been busy arranging the December schedule and there is much to look forward to.

Many thanks to our staff who go above and beyond the call of duty.

On behalf of the Board, I wish you and yours a very Merry Christmas and the very Best Wishes for a Happy 2024.

Respectfully submitted,
Laurie Forbes
Board Chair

Hebrews 6: 10: "For God *is* not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister."



From the Pastor's Desk:

Merry Christmas and Blessed New Year!
As we approach the Advent consequently Christmas, let us give thanks to God who sends us the Emmanuel.
This is a time of getting prepared and getting ready for the coming of Messiah and in my recent reflections, I have spoken about the coming of the Day of the Lord vehemently.
Jesus Christ is our true Hope, the source of joy, peace, love, and harmony in this uncertain world. Jesus does not only bring peace, but Christ is the Peace that the world needs.
Basically, the Advent season refers to the period starting four Sundays before Christmas. It is a time of preparation for the Christmas celebration as the church commemorates the coming of Jesus Christ. Advent also refers to the Second Coming of Jesus into the world.

As St Paul's Church family celebrates 150 years anniversary let us take some time to think of those who lived and worked before us, those whose memories and works shall forever be cherished.

As we celebrate our achievements let us not forget to pray for those who are no longer able to meet with us in person due to age and health issues and other constraints.

Our Christmas tea was a great success with an astounding number of children, youth, and young adults.

Advent and Christmas is a time to prioritize growth by intentionally reaching out to the community in discipleship.

A great example of this is the Intercultural and Interdenominational Prayer Meetings that have been established and are growing. We could:

- provide lunch to some international university students once in a while.
- sponsor youth and Sunday School Programs such as: Movie Nights and Indoor Games Night.
- I invite the St. Paul's Board to program special Board sessions where the youth are invited as observers to discuss their involvement in mapping the future of the church.

During Advent and Christmas, we remember friends, family and loved ones who have given, and will always give meaning to our lives. It is also a time we celebrate with our church family, including those who support the church with gifts, those who are attending in person and those making various sacrifices to keep the St. Paul's doors open.

Understandably, when it comes to Christmas, we think about the beginning of life - the birth of the Messiah.

Indeed, this is what we see and resonate with as it did for the majority of those who both prophesied his coming (Isaiah 9) and those who actually experienced it (Luke 2). And for those who celebrate this blessed event, the emphasis is naturally on the birth.

The Christmas story can be read and understood differently, it speaks to us differently and we interpret it differently. Reclaimed interpretations of the Christmas story emphasize details that we can't afford to miss.

Jesus being born into immense poverty, being announced to the socially outcast, bypassing the politically, economically, socially, and religiously accepted class of the day, and of his parents becoming violence-fleeing refugees for the wellbeing of their child.

There is an entire foundation here on which to build a framework for Christians who are working toward social justice today.

The story whispers to us of the need to prioritize the poor, the insignificant, forgotten, and the marginalized.

These are the people who gathered at this lowly manger and dared to believe that the baby who lay there, this good news, really belonged to them.
The message to the shepherds was,
"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people."
(Luke 2:8–10)

The baby in a manger would not affirm the dominant structure of society, of inequity, oppression, exploitation (See Luke 4:18-19). Instead, he would grow up to gather the outcast, the socially marginalized, those labeled and treated as less-than by the privileged and powerful.

He called for a society that did this, too, and it began with his early followers. Early communities of Jesus-followers were almost wholly comprised of people from society's edges.

At the heart of Luke's retelling of the Jesus story (and I believe it was the reason he—unlike Mark and John—included the details of Jesus' birth) is a desire to contrast Jesus' vision for human community of no more *oppression, exploitation* or marginalization with the much larger Roman society they lived in - and we must not forget what these stories say to those who are marginalized in our society.

And lastly, during this holiday season, in the midst of all that is taking place in the news presently, endless brutal wars and violence in many parts of the world. We must not forget what these stories say to those who are marginalized in our society.

We'll talk about all of this, too.
For now, it is enough to meditate on the fact that in the gospels' birth-narratives about Jesus, it is the marginalized who are centered.

It is foreigners, shepherds, the poor, the marginalized, women, children, outcasts - so-called "nobodies," and even the animals of a stable that gather around the manger to symbolize, I believe, the human community this newborn baby will grow up, to speak about.
The good news is for them.

May God bless you and your families abundantly!

May the Prince of Peace be with you and yours as you celebrate this Christmas!

May the Prince of Hope be with you and yours as you enter a New Year in prosperity and hope!

Love
Rev Desire

Kitchen Committee

The Kitchen Committee is delighted the Christmas Tea turned out so well. Deb's brilliant idea to have baking days was not only productive, it was fun! The women got together to bake and bake we did. I cannot wait for next year and the fun we will have.
Kristin, as she does every year, decorated Lunan Hall beautifully. This year the theme was silver and the hall looked just gorgeous. Thank you, Kristin!

Lynda, who had never taken on the bake table, met the challenge of this important role and did an amazing job organizing and selling the delicious baking. Thank you, Lynda.
Marla, Jodi, and Alexa worked hard at the bake table, selling all the goodies.

The kitchen committee (Judy, Jane, Karen, Marlene, Laurie, and although he was ill, Chris, who was with us in spirit) worked hard making fillings, sandwiches, cutting, and plating sandwiches and desserts.
We had Marlene's grandson help decorate the hall and her granddaughter plate sandwiches!
There was an army of helpers in the kitchen and tearoom, and we are so grateful for the help and support.
Janie once again looked after the Toonie Table, with many folks leaving with new treasures.
Glacier came to do dishes, not only were we happy to see him, he worked very hard.
Thank you, Glacier.

On baking days Tal Morgan stopped in to say hello and it was so nice to have his friendly encouragement.

Thank you everyone for making our Christmas Tea a success.
We made $3,500.00. *Yahoo!*

Respectfully submitted,
Laurie Forbes
On behalf of the Kitchen Committee

Church Family News

Members: Janie McDaid, Susan Phillips, Joy Himmelman, Hannah Cryer and Teresa Parr

Church Family would like to welcome out newest member, Teresa Parr to our group. Happy to have you on board Teresa.

Church Family will be hosting the Children's Christmas Party on Monday December 11th from 6:30-8:00. There will be games, crafts, snack, face painting and a visit from the BIG GUY himself. Parents you can take this opportunity to do some Christmas shopping or just chill at home.

If you have children who plan to attend, please register with Debra at the church office (807) 345-5864 by Friday December 8th at the latest. We need a head count so we can plan accordingly.
Our next event will be the pancake dinner in February. More on this later.

Have a blessed Christmas holiday season.
Merry Christmas from all the Church Family members to you.
Respectfully Submitted,
Janie McDaid

From the Music Room

Have you walked around your neighbourhood or driven around town and noticed the Christmas lights going up on everyone's houses?
Some may call them just Christmas lights.
I'd like to think of it as God's light reaching out in the darkness from one more inviting home.
In the hustle and bustle of the season where everyone is running around, the lights are a calming reminder that God is wanting to walk with us by sending Jesus.
A baby we can find by following the light. Advent can be a busy time but what better way to take a breath than to come to church.
A small moment in your week that will allow you a peaceful moment with God, a time for fellowship, and a gentle reminder that this is the time of year we celebrate the love light in our life.
Jesus arrived as a tiny ray of hope, the promise of peace, a spark of joy, and a showering of love.
At St. Paul's, we will help remind you through our music program.

Come join t he choir for Advent and Christmas!
We have some great music planned for the season and what better way than to sit up with the choir and sing!
Check out our website in the **Music** section for updates, a schedule of rehearsals and songs, and some help with rehearsing at home.
Rehearsals are Thursdays at 7:00 in Airth Hall.
Send me an email or come see me after the church service and I will make sure I have a binder ready for you!

The **Handbell Choir** have been busy practicing for upcoming services. They will also be guests at the Lakehead Choral Group Concert on Wednesday, December 13th at St. Agnus Church. Come see me for a ticket! $20 for Adults, $10 for Sr. and Youth.

Joy to the World, Hallelujah!!
Let's make a joyful noise for Christmas!

Yours in Music,
Diana Hannaford-Wilcox, Music Director
dlcwilcox@tbaytel.net

DECEMBER SPECIAL EVENTS:

3 – TBay Community Choir - St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church – 4 pm

7 – Christmas Cantata – First Wesley 7 pm

8 & 9 – TBSO presents "*Messiah*" – 7:30 pm

10 – Silver Sound Concert – 2 pm

11 – Children's Christmas Party 6:30 pm

13 – Women's Christmas Luncheon - Noon

13 – Lakehead Choral Group – 7 pm
with St. Paul's Handbell Choir
St. Agnes Church

24 – Martin Blanchet Jazz Quintet joins St. Paul's Choirs at our Christmas Eve Candlelight Family Service – 7 pm

The Worship Committee

It doesn't seem possible that we are writing Christmas Newsletters. Where did the year go! We have celebrated many things and have much to be grateful for.

As we head towards the end of the Christian year, and the season of Advent, where we prepare to receive the gift of Christ in our midst, let us remember that this gift is not just something that happened long ago, but a gift that we experience in our daily lives. God still shows up in surprising ways, so keep alert to the big and little ways every day that God makes known Christ in the world.

This Advent we will travel to the light of Christ's love that enters our lives to shine on the pathway leading to a life filled with love and hope.

Travelling from darkness to light reminded me of a story I heard at the Festival of Homiletics this past May. The Pastor was from the southern States, and he told of political unrest and a time of challenge for those who worshipped together. They were so fearful security guards had been hired to protect those coming to church. It was a dark time. The Pastor as leader of this faith community was constantly on edge and on guard. One night he was wakened from his sleep to the sound of footsteps in his home, it was the middle of the night so all should have been quiet. He felt the need to protect his family and went to find the source of the footsteps, what he found was his 5-year-old daughter, up, in the dark, practicing her dance steps for a recital. She was dancing in the dark and invited him to join her! He realized how profound this was, in a time of great fear and darkness, she was dancing in the dark, but the dark did not consume her. She was letting her joy and light shine.

So, this Advent as we prepare for the light given to us, through the Babe in a manger, let us also remember the light shown by a 5-year-old dancer, and remember our own light, the light given to us long ago is still with us. Thanks be to God.

May the Blessings of Christmas be with you,

Cyndy Raby,

Worship Chair

Communications Committee

Reverend Desire Tiriwepi, Diana Hannaford-Wilcox, Andor Petrovich, Laurie Forbes, Teresa Parr, Deb

Our church enjoyed a bustling, event-filled autumn that provided us with so much fun, spiritual inspiration and heart-warming fellowship.

Our committee prepared advertising and posters for these events and are grateful for people like Karen Reinikka who has so kindly distributed numerous posters around our city - for several of our events!

We're so appreciative of all the people who joined in to make each event such an enjoyable and memorable occasion.

In September, we sent out invitations to other churches and our Camp Duncan Worship Service was so well-attended and enjoyed by several congregations, next year is already in our plans!

Similarly, Reverend Desire's Intercultural Prayer Meetings with the African Choir have been so uplifting, they are seeing more and more people coming out to participate in prayer and fellowship.

In October, our Committee Fair renewed interest and saw people approaching and joining committees. This is so wonderful – we all need to keep the momentum going.
In November, our Christmas Tea and Bake Sale was well advertised and very successful.

All our Christmas services and events are listed on the front page and will also be shared on Facebook and advertised in the newspaper.

Our committee's promotional initiative this fall was to purchase and sell cloth bags with our sharp, new St. Paul's logo. They will heighten awareness of our church within the community and maybe even spark some conversations of interest!
The bags are navy blue with our logo contrasting in white.
We have:
Small bags **($7^{1/2}$ x 10") selling for $2 and**
grocery-size bags **($11^{1/2}$ x 14") selling for $3**.
So … *if you need bags, please purchase one from St. Paul's and help promote our Church.*
You could even add some bright, tissue paper and use them for gift giving!!

On behalf of all of us on the Communications team we wish you a *very* Merry and Bright Christmas!

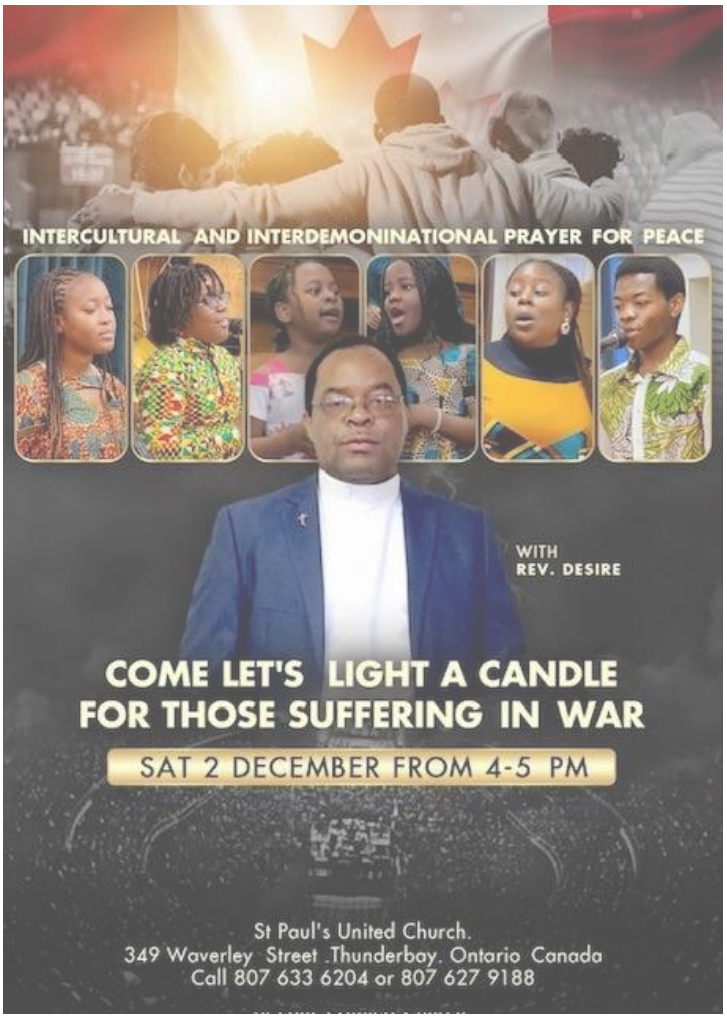
Submitted with love,
Deb

Ministry & Personnel Committee

As I sit here writing this, the sun is shining, it's -10 out and there is no snow on the ground.
But it is coming - - just like Christmas which is just around the corner. The hustle and bustle of the season can be seen inside our church building as we prepare.
Needless to say, our staff are busy doing all the little and big jobs to prepare us for the season, as well as the coming year.
In the office, Deb is constantly making sure we stay informed with the weekly What's UP, Facebook updates and keeping our newly updated website fresh with new information as it comes available. She is the first person you encounter when entering the church during the week and her smiling face and demeanour always lightens up your day.
All the summer tools and equipment have been put away and, Michael will be very busy making sure that all is ready for the numerous events that are going on inside the church in the coming month. This is a daunting task as no sooner does he get everything shipshape and tidy when another event happens and its start all over from square one. Even so, we know that it will once again be ready for the next one. So "keep on trucking" Michael!
Our Youth Group has hit a bump in the road due to declining numbers, but attempts are being made to resurrect it - so keep tuned for further updates through our various media sources.
It's the sound of the season that makes me smile and Diana has that well in hand, filling the music program with a Joyful Noise. The choirs are ringing and singing, and things are humming along nicely for a wonderful advent season.
She is presently working on the national Music Matters conference which will be held at St. Paul's next spring.

By the way if you run into Diana, feel free to congratulate her on **25 Years** of Service at St. Paul's as our Music Director.

Congratulations, Diana!
Reverend Desire will have been here for two years in February, and his presence with us has been felt in every corner of this church and community. With his style and exuberance on Sundays, to the formation of the monthly Intercultural Prayer Meeting and the inclusion of the African Choir in some services, he has brought a little more life and energy into our midst.



Let see how far we can go to build more energy and joy in the pews and grow our numbers by word of mouth on what we are doing and trying to do here at St. Paul's.
Congratulations are in order as Reverend Desire received his Master of Divinity from Drew University this year and has started on his Doctorate.
Well done Rev D and let's all walk this road together as move forward into the future.

On behalf of Jodi Martin, Joy Himmelman and Andre Kreikmann, I would like to thank the staff for all their hard work and dedication to the betterment of St Paul's.

Respectfully Submitted
Rejean Langliois

ISTHMUS

We continue to feed over 400 children in our city's schools. It is a huge number supported in part by many members of this generous congregation.

The cost of supporting a child for one (1) year remains at $120.00.
If you want to donate you can do so through the *Isthmus website.* Be sure to designate your payment to:

ISTHMUS - THUNDER BAY.

The large jar is still at the back of the church for donations of any denomination. Cash donations always go towards the purchase of fresh fruit every week.
Single-serving portions of oatmeal, snack bars, can soup, can spaghetti, canned beans, can tuna or salmon, juice boxes, etc can be dropped off in the church office or the baskets at the back of the sanctuary.

God Bless everyone & your generosity.
Marlene Crago

Finance and Administration Committee

Hello Congregation,
We have been a very busy church this past fall.

Lately, we've been working hard preparing the annual budget, as well as maintaining monthly duties and counting the givings.

I'd like to thank you, the congregation, for your offerings which helps to keep our church alive and thriving. Reverend Desire brings our church to life with both his dynamic preaching and thoughtful initiatives for growing our numbers.

Givings can be submitted in person - - or as a monthly 'Pre-authorized Remittance' (PAR) which can be easily set up through Deb in the office - - or as a direct deposit e-transfer, which can me remitted through your banking app to office@stpaulstbay.net

Your official income tax receipt for all givings will be mailed to you in the new year.

Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Sincerely,
Andor Petrovich, Chair

Diversity & Inclusion Committee

Long ago and far away, in an area now ravaged by brutal war motivated by sectarian and cultural "difference", a babe was born to bring peace and to share God's love for all. This Babe was visited by persons of the lowest class and by persons of high degree. Then with his parents, he became a refugee, fleeing to Egypt, just as persons are attempting to do even now. Later, he called women and men to be his followers, ate with people others shunned, touched the untouchables. And he brought his message of love and acceptance to the rich and the poor, the weak and the powerful. This is the One whose birth we celebrate in this season!

Your Diversity and Inclusion (AKA Affirming) Team works to encourage all of us to live out this message of love and acceptance in our church and in the world beyond our walls.

By the time you receive this, we will have hosted a special Tea and Teachings event with elder Gene Bannon from the FWFN. This was an opportunity to learn more about our Indigenous neighbours and their spirituality. Such a rich tradition, from which we could learn so much! It is heartening to note that we now have a few people of Indigenous background worshipping with us every week. May we continue to be open to learning from them, and from all others among us.

It's wonderful to see how diverse our Congregation is becoming, as we welcome people of every race, gender expression, ability, and more! I think that Babe, whose birth we celebrate, would feel right at home at our after-church coffee hours!

Wishing you all a blessed Advent and Christmas season!

Zoë Dubec, Ernie Epp, Tanya Forneri, Chazz Gogol, Dale Haché, Gail Henderson, Jared Hynnes, Susan Marrier, Brian McLaren, Brenda Reimer, and Steve Robertson