

Knox News & Notes



December 2018/January 2019

Advent, Christmas and 2019

I came across this poem from Frank Morris in one of my files.

*How is it that God above
Has never gone on strike
Because he was not treated fair
In things He didn't like.*

*If only once He'd given up,
And said, 'That's it, I'm through!
I've had enough of those on earth,
So this is what I'll do;*

*I'll give my orders to the sun -
'Cut off the heat supply!'
And to the moon - 'Give no more
Light, and run the ocean dry.'*

*Then just to make things really tough
And put the pressures on,
'Turn off the vital oxygen
Till every breath is gone!'*

*You know, He would be justified
If fairness was the game.
For no one has been abused
Or met with more disdain*

*Than God, and yet He carries on
Supplying you and me
With all the favors of His grace
And everything for free.*

*Men say they want a better deal
And so on strike they go.
But what a deal we've given
To God to whom all things we owe.*

*We don't care whom we hurt
To gain the things we like.
But what a mess we'd all be in
If God should go on strike!!*



Is anything more mysterious? The love of God offered to those who aren't even looking for it; those who deserve it least.

Is anything in the universe more powerful? God's love is able to turn his one-time enemies into his forever friends.

More than that, the love of God adopts us into his family: See how very much our heavenly Father loves us, for he allows us to be called his children, and we really are! (1 John 3:1 NLT).

What is Christian family about?

It is about Christ; nothing more and nothing less. Our life together as Christians has nothing to do with ideology or philosophy. We are a people who believe the Good News that Beauty, Truth and Goodness are found in a Person; Jesus who was born in Bethlehem. Our fellowship and family ties is founded and found on the connection to that Person. In meeting him, believing that he is who the Bible says he is – the Messiah, the Son of the Living God, the Saviour, calls for much more in our lives than simply a change in direction; it's a call to change our connection.

Entering into Advent and celebrating Christmas calls all of us anew not to view the familiar celebrations from a distance, or to participate without any expectations or in a kind of robotic programmed way, but to be open to explore the deeper meaning of this relationship where God is command central of all my human connections.

May we experience much joy and blessings in the Christmas Season and may God bless us so we can be a blessing to others each and every day of our lives!

Rev Johan



Look Into God's Word

Have you ever wondered “what might God’s will be for me?” Well, we believe that God has a plan for each one’s life, and that plan might not be easy to detect. But, God’s will for every one of his children can be found in scripture. Here are some specific commands from 1Thessalonians chapter 5:

- Be at peace with everyone (verse 13)
- Encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone (verse 14)
- Guard against those who would repay wrong for wrong (verse 15)
- Strive to do what is good for others (verse 15)
- Rejoice always (verse 16)
- Pray continually verse (17)
- Always give thanks regardless of the circumstances (verse 18)

Knox Youth

As we approach Christmas and the hustle and bustle of the season, I look back on the fall fun that has been had. It has been a season of growth, fun, and service. The youth have been actively involved in the youth nights, and special events. We enjoyed some fall festivities with a pumpkin party, where we carved pumpkins, bobbed for apples, and ate way too much candy! Our youth nights have seen some new faces, and our conversations and faith has deepened. Youth are living out their faith, by reaching out to their communities through service projects and are becoming a light in the darkness.



In October we collected over 60 coats to donate to Royal City's Life Centre program. What a blessing to give our community the gift of warmth! Thank you to everyone for contributing to this service project!



In November we began our Christmas fundraising initiatives to raise money for the Gifts of Change program through Presbyterian World Service & Development Christmas Catalogue. Knox Youth have identified a goal of raising \$650 to purchase a cow. They will be having a silent auction to raise funds to purchase a cow (\$650) for a family in need in a third world country.

If you are interested in supporting this cause, you can come do so by joining us at a Silent Auction on December 2nd, after Sunday Service in Metcalf Hall during coffee hour. The youth will be auctioning off their services and other items in order to reach their goal. You can also make a donation through Sunday offering, by marking your donation as "cow fund". Donations will be accepted until December 3rd.

On Sunday Dec. 9th Knox Youth welcomes you to join them in Caroling at some local nursing homes. We will meet at the church at 6:30pm and carpool to Guelph Lake Commons as our first stop. We will return to the church at the end of the evening.

The youth will be having an Ugly Sweater Christmas party on Monday December 10th at 6:30pm. Please wear your ugliest Christmas sweater and bring a small gift (value \$5) to participate in our gift game. If you are unable to bring a gift, please let me know, and one will be provided for you. Please note that this will be our last youth night. There will be no youth nights on December 17, December 24, and December 31 due to Christmas Holidays!

Leave of Absence

Please note that I will be taking a leave of absence from Jan. 6th - Apr. 8th to complete the final portion of my Masters of Social Work program. I will be working in a full-time community placement in a clinical social work role. During this 13-week period, there will no youth nights or youth events. I am looking forward to this wonderful opportunity to advance my learning, and thank you for your patience during this time. I am also very eager to return to Knox in the spring to continue the work that has begun with the youth, in this great ministry!

Blessings!

Laurie Trace
Youth Ministries Coordinator

Fall Festival a Great Success

Our second annual Fall Festival had 35 tables with crafters, vendors and artisans displaying their products. Feedback from surveys was very positive and most are looking forward to coming back next year. As you know, these events cannot happen without the combined effort of SO MANY people, in SO MANY ways!

Thanks to:

Those who made signs, had signs made, handed them out to others or put them up in their buildings or workplaces..., to those who sent Vendors and Artisans our way..., to those who made preserves, cookies, cakes, muffins, tarts, squares, homemade items and more..., to all who provided the muscle power to move furniture out of rooms, set up tables and chairs, swept floors..., to the people made the tea biscuits, donated all the supplies for the Tea Room and to all who served those who enjoyed these treats, did dishes and more..., to everyone who provided the people power to make the day work...those who helped vendors unload, our greeters, our ticket sellers, runners and more..., to those who again provided muscle power to take down tables, sweep floors, move furniture back into rooms..., to everyone who attended, enjoyed refreshments in the tea room, bought raffle tickets, supported the local vendors...Our thanks to all of you!!

To everyone who contributed in any degree towards making Fall Festival 2018 the resounding success it was, know that your efforts were so very much appreciated, not only by the Retreat Ladies and Friends but by all who came to Knox and enjoyed a great day because of you!

Santa Claus Parade



The next Retreat Ladies & Friends event was serving Hot Chocolate, Coffee and Popcorn at the Santa Claus Parade. The day was perfect, there was snow on the ground but the temperature was comfortable. The lineups at our table was proof the people appreciated the opportunity to purchase a beverage and popcorn as well as have the use of our washrooms, nursery and warming station.

Once again we are grateful for the support and people power provided to set up and take down the tent, tables and everything else needed to make this event possible. Thanks to Brian B. for clearing the snow away at the back door first thing Sunday morning. Thanks to Phil, Dave, Forrest, Ross, David

& Jeff for all their help with the set up and takedown. To Heather, Lisa, Dave, Ross, Liz E. for serving. Thanks to Jeff & David for running the popcorn machine so efficiently, to Yvonne for making the hot chocolate & coffee. Thanks to Deb, Marg, Karen who were our greeters and to Wendy and Ann who provided directions in the washroom hallway. Even Santa thanked the people of Knox for looking after his friends. A good time was had by all. Apologies to anyone I might have missed thanking.

Next Events: Soup & Chili Luncheons – Mark your calendars: Sunday January 20, 2019 and Sunday, March 3, 2018 following worship.



“I am with you always”

“WHEN TWO OR THREE - OR FOUR - GATHER TOGETHER”

The Sacrament of Communion touches lives.

October 7, 2018 was World Communion Sunday, and for reasons I don't quite understand, preparing for that Sacrament of Grace (I would be sharing the Cup in the Communion liturgy) brought back so many memories of Communion I have celebrated over the last thirty-nine years either as Minister or received in the pews along with my sisters and brothers in Christ. The Sacrament of Communion has been, since I was a child, with little understanding of what it was all about, deeply meaningful for me. And yet, it seems that we - I - can become rather complacent about this Sacrament, going through the motions untouched by the unfathomable, unmeasurable gift of grace it symbolizes and re-presents each time we receive into our hands those simple elements of bread and juice, the Bread of Life, the Cup of Forgiveness. And yet, as I share Communion with our seniors in homes or nursing homes I realize again and again how meaningful and vital this Sacrament can be, especially to seniors who have been faithfully involved in the church for a life-time. I thought maybe I could share something of this with you by sharing a memory. Yes, it's an old one but it's still fresh and deeply meaningful for me - that's often the way life-impacting memories are, especially in those difficult and emotionally tender times.

Recently when I was preparing Communion to take to one of our Knox seniors who is unable to attend church I was suddenly taken back to another Communion many years ago in Montreal. It's not something I am able to sufficiently put into words but maybe sharing that long ago Communion can express something of what I believe can, if not every time, but often be a vital part of a Communion celebration and what Jesus meant when he said: “where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”(Matt. 18:20)

On that day, the morning mail had arrived at the church and had been added to the growing stack of papers scheduled for my attention and response that day. Because of an early start, I was making considerable progress toward this goal and was enjoying that great “Wow! Look what I've accomplished already today” feeling when the telephone rang. Marion, who was eighty-one years old and an active elder at St. Matthew's for a number of years, quickly explained that she had called Gordon and Helen (elderly members in her elder district) to see how they were and to remind them that the next day she and I would be visiting and would share Communion with them.

“When Gordon answered the phone,” Marion said, “I could tell immediately that he was very upset”. Gordon explained that Helen, “was becoming more and more difficult to take care of adequately”. They had no living relatives so the responsibility for Helen's care had fallen entirely on Gordon. For the last three years he had carried out this task with tender, patient dedication and love.

Several months earlier I had arranged for them to receive meals-on-wheels which was of considerable help, but because of a shortage of both workers and government financing, other needed supports such as help with major housekeeping chores and hygienic care for Helen were not available. The immediate problem, Gordon explained, was Helen's incontinence and the increasing symptoms of dementia. She was confined to bed much of the time but for the last 3 days had been getting out of bed on her own and several times had fallen on the floor. Gordon, because of his health and double hernia, was unable to lift her so each time he had called the police to come and place her back in the bed. “And now,” Gordon said, “Helen's bed is wet for the second time this morning.” Further conversation revealed that Helen had not been bathed in about five weeks — other than face and hands — and it was even longer since her hair had been washed. Gordon said he needed help and asked Marion to “call the minister”.

I phoned Gordon and arranged for Marion and me to be at his home in about an hour - he quickly reminded me I was to bring Communion. We were warmly greeted by a visibly relieved Gordon. We talked while they finished their meals-on-wheels lunch which had arrived earlier than usual. During our conversation it was decided that Marion and I would give Helen a bath and wash her hair. Helen with child-like eagerness declared "lets get at it". Marion drew the bath, I rounded up the towel and toiletries and when all was ready Marion and I took on the challenge of placing in the tub, this elderly woman who was taller than either of us and though eager for the bath, hesitated because she was afraid of falling.

This challenge successfully met I began bathing Helen. She relaxed and soon a smile softened her face. After a few moments, she looked at me and then at Marion with a very surprised look on her face said, "You know, this is the first time a minister ever gave me a bath" and she laughed. Through the laughter she said, "But all my ministers have been men — they would never have given me a bath!" We all laughed and continued with the bath, laughing and remembering 'old times' at St. Matthew's.

The bath completed, Marion began drying Helen with a soft bath towel and I went to select for her a fresh nightgown. Gordon was sitting in the living room, which was just next to the short hallway that led to the bathroom. He was crying. I sat down next to him. He blew his nose and said, "I'm sorry, it's just that I haven't heard Helen laugh like that in two years. It sounded so good, like it used to be. I'm happy to hear her laugh like that again, but still it makes me cry." A few words and a couple of hugs later, I was back in the bathroom.

In a short time Helen, dressed in a lovely yellow nightgown (one she had recently received for her 89th birthday), her favourite housecoat, and her freshly shampooed hair softly framing her smiling face, sat hand-in-hand with Gordon on the living room couch.

Marion and I were setting out the Communion elements and responding to Gordon's questions about the things happening at the church when Helen, in a very quiet voice, began talking about how grateful she was for all God had given her - for the life she had shared with Gordon, for her many friends at the church. As Helen spoke Gordon nodded in agreement never taking his tear-filled eyes from her face.

Helen's remarks led us naturally into the sharing of Communion. The talk, the bath, the laughter and tears, the expressions of gratitude, gathered us into such a warm closeness that I could only describe it as a feeling of being part of the 'Body' for during those moments the love of God, which is proclaimed by this Sacrament, was for us very real, even 'touchable'...

A couple of weeks later, Helen was moved to a local nursing home owned, at that time, by the Presbyterian Church. I visited with Gordon the next day. He had prepared a letter for me, in which he had written down several of his most cherished memories and experiences he had shared with Helen (he wanted me to have these for his funeral service when that time came). At the top of the list was the afternoon of "Helen's bath" and the "Communion shared by the four of us".

Marion and I also cherished that afternoon - that 'sacred' experience — each of us for our own reasons, although among those reasons was one the three of us (Gordon, Marion and I) shared and that was the experience and the sense of being one in our human need, not only of each other, but one in our need of the grace of Christ Jesus. That afternoon in that small room, in that intimate gathering, the Bread and Cup 'spoke' to our need and we knew we had 'heard', had been 'touched'. We had experienced Jesus' promise, "where two or three (or four) are gathered in my name, I am there among them" - and I remember.

PS: The names have been changed to protect privacy. Marion, Gordon and Helen passed away approximately three years after this shared Communion.

Submitted by: Dr. Shirley Gale, Pastoral Assistant

Church School Chatter



This is such a busy but happy time of year for all!

Decorations are going up, people are shopping for the perfect gift for others, baking delicious treats, kids are counting down the days until School is out for the Christmas Break, and our annual Children's Pageant is upon us!

At the time of writing this, we are well into prep for that big day!

Our kids are pretty amazing... I asked them for their top 3 choices on what they wanted to be in the pageant, but if I sat down with them and said I needed something different than what they had indicated, they were so willing to change and be something else. Such amazing adaptability for our young church family members! I am sure everyone will find the pageant special...because of these young people!

There will be joint all ages classes for children up to grade 6 on December 16 and December 23. There will be NO CLASSES for any age on December 30.

I invite everyone with children, or even those who are simply "young at Heart" to join us Christmas Eve for a Family Service celebrating Christ's Birth, at 6:30 p.m. This will be an intergenerational service where we share the good news together!

Our Winter Curriculum and classes will recommence on Sunday January 7. AS always, there is a need for helpers in some of the classes, so if this is something you would be interested in doing please let me know.

To all of our Knox Family and Friends, I wish you all a blessed Christmas and New Year.

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Isaiah 9:6

Karen Bellamy

In Memoriam



Church Register:

Deaths:

Ivan Stinson
Mary Dollery

Died October 04, 2018
Died November 07, 2018

Age 91 Years
Age 93 Years

Musical Notes*By Chris Fischer, Pastoral Musician*

This is a very stressful time of year for many people (not just musicians!). I recently came across a published study that suggested that early and prolonged exposure to Christmas music, decorations, and the like can cause feelings of depression and heightened anxiety, particularly around financial matters. For us in the church, the season of Advent ought not to be a contributor to these symptoms: this season should be about patient, active waiting for the fulfillment of a realm of peace and justice, of hope and promise, of joy and thankfulness, of love and compassion, in our city and in our world. If anything, this waiting should be a period of de-stressing ourselves from the cares and concerns that populate our thoughts and lead to worries about whether we've thought of every little thing in our holiday planning.

But how do we accomplish this? How can we as a church family carve out some time and space for the Christ event in our lives right now, instead of obsessing about the future or the past? Well, as your pastoral musician, I thought I would share a couple of thoughts that enable me to de-escalate my own fear and anxiety in the face of this season's unique demands.

I try, as much as it is possible when a large portion of my job concerns future planning and preparation, to centre my mind and heart in the present moment: to reflect on the great blessing that music – especially music of this season – brings to my life. I listen to the song of the community around me, the anthems of choirs, the concert performances of friends and colleagues, with a sense of awe and wonder; music really is an amazing medium for communication of not only important words and ideas, but of beauty and intense connection to all of humanity and beyond! When I allow myself to pay attention, truth is clear and present with far more clarity than through speech or the written word alone. When I slow down and really listen, I am grounded and at peace.

This Advent and Christmas, I invite you to make space for the music of the season, not to ramp up feelings of dread for the number of items to bake or buy, but to hear the timeless message to “be not afraid.” Our Sanctuary Choir, handbell ensembles, LOGOS and church school children and youth, will all assist us as a family to listen to this message: through the Church School Pageant, the special music of our Advent and Christmas Eve carol services, and, in a more meditative vein this year, in the sung meditations offered by our choir in the “cantata” service on Sunday, December 16 (the third Sunday of Advent). In that service, the choir and soloists will present five different settings on a medieval liturgical text for Christmas – “O Magnum Mysterium” (“O great mystery”) – from several centuries, each one reflecting on this mystery of God-with-us in its own way. The text which each composer has set is a simple poem which expresses awe for the breaking in of God upon this world: a “wonderful sacrament, that animals should see the new-born Lord lying in a manger.” This is the greatest gift, one of those “thin places” referred to by mystics over the millennia, where this world and the realm of the sacred are joined.

This little meditation leads to my second point: that the world really is in a state of unity and harmony. We convince ourselves, particularly if we follow the news these days, that this is not the case. In fact, it is easy to conclude that, in many respects, things have never been worse. Yet this is a media-fed distortion of reality. We who are living in this time and place are not disconnected from one another, or from the eternal: the truth of the gospel message, as we repeat in the music of this beautiful season, is that Emmanuel has come. Why should we be afraid?

So, my advice, to reiterate, is to make space for the holy this Advent and Christmas: invite the Spirit in, through the sights, sounds, tastes, smells, and textures of this special time. And remember, no matter what, that the Great Mystery is among us, around us, and within us. Amen. And Merry Christmas to all!