



The W.U.C. Uniter

Woodroffe United Church
613-722-9250
woodroffeunited.org

*Love was born at Christmas,
Star and Angels gave the sign.*
Christina Rossetti, 1885



Advent 2014

Happy Advent, Everyone!

Christmas is almost upon us! It is that wonderful time of year, the time of carols and decorations, of pageants and solemn candle lit services. Also the time of snow and ice, but nothing is perfect. This is, of course, a busy time here at the church. As I write this, the mitten trees are up in the hall, and they are already starting to be dressed in donated knitting. They still have lots of room left, of course, so don't hold back! Outreach registration for our holiday giving is underway in the chapel, and we are looking for contributions of travel size toiletries. And we have lots and lots of stuff on the schedule! Here's a highlight list:

- November 30 is the first Sunday of Advent. We will be celebrating Communion, and Baptism. After the service will be our Deck the Halls celebration, with crafts for the kids. This is also the last day to take an Angel from the Angel Tree.
- December 7 is our annual Lessons and Carols service in the morning, and our Kindle a Flame service in the evening.
- December 14 is our Pageant service.
- December 21 is the last Sunday in Advent, and Alan Edwards will be preaching.
- Christmas Eve we have our usual two services—the louder, more family centric service at 7pm, and the quieter, more reflective Communion service at 11pm.

And those are just the worship things going on in the next little while! We also have the annual choir concert and turkey dinner extravaganza, the Friday morning study group, the UCW Potluck and candlelight service, and much, much more! We are a busy place, and it is a busy time of year!

So, in the midst of the busyness, and despite the busyness, let me offer to you a prayer for a wonderful, holy, Christmas. At the end of the day, this is a celebration of the birth of a tiny baby born oh so many years ago. It is the story of a young mother, scared, away from her family and supports, giving birth to her first child in a time and place when birth was often a fatal experience. It is a story of worry, of pain, of struggle—and ultimately of great joy and celebration. Christmas is a story of a God who understands what it is to be human—all of our joys and pains, all of our fears and hopes. A divine presence that is within us and around us, that is a part of us, and all that we see. Christmas is a reminder that God is not something “out there”, but something right here, in each and every one of us.

May the peace, hope, joy and love of Advent and Christmas be with each and every one of you.

Yours in Christ, Matt Gallinger

Woodroffe's Words of Wisdom

- Willie Curd

After more than 30 years of collecting and displaying quotable quotes on the board at the parking lot entrance, I have decided to pass on the opportunity to someone else. If you are interested, I can supply many suggestions to help you. Please contact me for further information at williepete_@sympatico.ca.

Ed. note: The first person I mentioned this to exclaimed, "Oh, no. That's my favourite thing coming into the church." We are sure this is a common feeling. From all of us, a big Thank You goes to Willie, for providing Willie's Words of Wisdom over the years.

Reflection on Christmas

- Iain McGilveray, Editor

Hark the Herald Tribune sings, advertising wondrous things.

Angels we have heard on high, tell us to go out and buy. Tom Lehrer, 1959

When I first heard the above ditty in my early 20s, it certainly summed up some negative thoughts about the commercialization of Christmas, which has certainly increased enormously since the 1950s.

Now, hopefully more mature, I have more rational thoughts as I bring up old memories. My earliest Christmas memories, from wartime Glasgow, was mother going to a special cupboard and bringing out a “Charlie Brown” artificial tree (red beads for holly—not quite natural!). She also retained rather flimsy Christmas gift paper from year to year, as war economy measures made tinsel and wrapping paper scarce. This cupboard also had a huge Christmas book that I read in later years (lots of Dickens). I was fortunate to have a (9 years) older brother for hand-me-down toys from the 30s as such luxuries in wartime were scarce.

However, it is only now that I realize the enormous efforts my mother made through many years as a Christmas hostess, with 20 around her dining table (in the “parlour”) in a rather small apartment. These included many maiden aunts and cousins (their potential spouses, I realize now, lost in WW1 carnage) and sometimes visiting strangers. (It was not quite Dylan Thomas’s *A Child’s Christmas in Wales*, but there were resonances!). In later years my brother’s and sister’s spouses and family joined the group. The pièce-de-résistance was always the “*clootie dumpling*” a Scottish Christmas pudding (always to a secret family recipe). Later in life I participated in a few such Christmases with my wife’s family in North East Scotland. Of course, when they passed on, my wife tried to replicate this in Ottawa with reasonable sized groups, sometimes with work colleagues and their wives and children—if they were far from home. Indeed in all these efforts *Love came down at Christmas*.

Even in today’s world, most of the work of bringing this joy, and family or friends’ love of Christmas celebration, devolves mainly on women. I am certainly grateful to the women of my family for using their talents and leaving me fond memories of these times, I which now cherish. This is a very different sentiment from Tom Lehrer’s cynicism! **Merry Christmas** to all!

A special Woodroffe United Christmas gift

- Sue Smarkala

Each year, over 150 congregants are involved in the Woodroffe United *Shortbread Cookie - Christmas Card* gift. First and foremost the bakers among us prepare all manner of shortbread cookies, in the shapes of angels, stars, squares, rounds, fingers, hearts, iced, sprinkled and plain. Then there are people who store and take care of these goodies until December 6. That morning, they are turned into yummy individual gifts by the ‘shortbread cookie wrapping’ ladies: setting out 70 - 75 plates in the Friendship Room, placing cookie assortments on each one, and wrapping them in pretty crinkly clear paper. Our secret Santa card writer has all the special Christmas greetings ready and the card is tied to the gift plate with a curly bow. The clever wrappers will sort the gifts by location so several can be delivered to the same residence or neighbourhood. On December 7, all kinds of people swarm around the plates in the Banquet Room after service and scoop up those for friends, friends of friends, and deliver them, one and all. These tasty treats go to our congregants who just cannot get to church as often as they would like, and we want to tell them we remember them. Each person, receiving their Woodroffe United gift of caring, feels the warm thoughts we send them in our cookies, wrapping, card and personal delivery. It is also a very special feeling to be part of the activity creating the gift!

Imagine—every year—over 150 people get involved in this!

Christian Education

- Ray Cuthbert, Chair of CE

With Advent fast approaching there are many things to look forward to in the world of Christian Education at Woodroffe. The Church School has over 20 children registered. We are blessed to have a dedicated teaching team and nursery attendants who look after and teach our children.

The ever-popular *Babies and Friends Luncheon* occurs as this *Uniter* is being issued. At the luncheon, the children will learn about the history of White Gift Sunday and we will be talking about our Mitten and Angel Trees. There is always a good selection of kid friendly and yummy food on hand for the kids to enjoy. A craft and story time will bring the families together as we prepare for the Christmas season.

The Church School is also preparing for this year's Christmas Pageant. It will take place during service on Sunday, December 14. You will want to reserve your front pew soon—it looks to be a very interesting, fun, and different ensemble. It promises to be a performance you will not forget. Be sure not to miss it!

On behalf of the Christian Education Committee and the Church School, I would also like to send a special thank you to Diana Baird who, with several of our youth (Madelyne Borys, Erin Wai and Lexie Stewart), made a beautiful banner for the Church School that hangs in the stairwell leading up to the School. If you haven't already, take a look!

Finally, a reminder that over the Christmas season, the nursery will stay open but the Church School will be closed for three Sundays: December 21, 28 and January 4.

We wish all the families and members of Woodroffe United a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

In fellowship, Ray Cuthbert

Local Outreach Activities

- Iain McGilveray

At this time of year the Local Outreach Committee goes in to high gear for Christmas activities, to ensure that needy families within our district have some cheer for Christmas. They can register with us for food vouchers and children's gifts on Tuesdays and Wednesdays in November and December. Names are checked with a central registry in Caring & Sharing (formerly Christmas Exchange) to eliminate duplication with other agencies. We distribute the vouchers and appropriate gifts to people and families on Saturdays, December 13 & 20.

Cut-out angels with children's ages will be hung on the angel trees November 23 & 30. The congregation is asked to take angels from the angel tree and buy age-appropriate gifts (ages are from birth to 16 years of age), then bring them to church on White Gift Sunday, December 7. We also have our Mitten Trees, where you can hang mittens, socks, scarves, gloves, and hats. We also ask that you bring small toiletry articles, which you can place in the food box in the narthex. The committee sorts White Gifts and toiletries by age, ready for the distribution days on December 13 & 20.

Mission and Service Committee

- Allison Hockin

The Mission and Service Committee is looking for new members! The M&S committee updates the congregation with monthly Minutes for Mission about activities funded through M&S givings, and coordinates the church's response to requests for assistance from outside the local community around areas of special concern. Our biggest activity every year is the Stone Soup lunch, which is coming up on January 25, 2015.

Regular M&S meetings are on the fourth Wednesday of every month and our next meeting will be Wednesday, November 26, 2014 at 7pm in the Chapel. There will be no December meeting and our January meeting will be on Wednesday, January 14, 2015, to plan for Stone Soup. If you're interested in joining M&S, feel free to attend our next meeting or speak to any M&S member (Bev McKee, Allison Hockin, Muriel McGuinty or Jean Eadie).

Stewardship Campaign Kickoff

- Trish Curtis, Chair of Stewardship

Please remember this campaign, even after November 23, and do what you can to help Build for the Future. The next 10 months or so will be a time of change, as we accustom ourselves to having only one minister and to being without our now retired, long-term energizer bunny—I mean minister—Jan Lougheed. This will prepare us for the new level of ministerial support we will have in the future. This is the time to create our strong foundation for the future. This is the perfect time to build for the future. And... this is our campaign theme (drumroll please!), **'Building for the Future.'**

As you may be aware, over the past years we have substantially maintained and improved this building to attract and keep users of the space and new congregants. We have done much good in that regard—yes, there are still some things to be done, but, as you will hear from Joe within a few weeks, we are doing quite well. With recent donations we have covered the costs of the bathroom renovations, and have some spare money in the building and renovation fund, which will probably be put towards some roof repairs.

However, it is time to look forward and time to improve our bottom line so that we have sufficient funds to handle emergencies. And we can do that. Because we currently are paying salaries for less than 1 full time minister instead of 1¾ ministers we are saving money on salaries and benefits. We expect these savings will enable us to pay off our debts and build up our reserves again to healthier levels. When we finish the search process next year, we should have a level of ministerial support that is more in line with the congregation's current givings.

The hope is that after building up our reserves appropriately, we will be able to do more of what our congregation wants to: reach out and help others. There are many charities which benefit from our current givings to outreach and M&S, but there may be others which we could support. When the funds raised are no longer needed to keep the lights on in the building, they can be used directly for additional valuable services to help our neighbours. Think about what you would like your church to be able to do, and let the church know. Share your ideas and visions. We are going to shore up our foundations and build a better future together!

Remember - Stewardship is not just about money. Ask yourselves what YOU can do to help your church, your church family and the world. Can you volunteer some of your time and talent to help your church through the massive changes of this year? Our volunteers make volunteering FUN! Office help, help with dinners, game nights, fund raisers, outreach activities, coffee time, visiting the homebound, gardening, maintenance—there are many places where your time and energy and talents can be put to good use. Recently one member volunteered his time, energy and talent to repair and paint the wall of the hallway to the banquet hall so that the church would look its best when people visit during the bazaar. Many people volunteered or baked for the bazaar, which made it another great success this year. Welcome strangers to our church. Talk to your friends and neighbours and invite them to attend the church or its fundraising events. Show the world that we are a loving, generous and caring community. By this we also build and strengthen our foundations for the future.

Our campaign idea came from Matthew 7, verses 24 through 27:

Build Your House on the Rock

“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”

Let us build a strong foundation, for our future.

Financials for 2014 (end of October)

- Joe Smarkala, Treasurer

Our financials, at the end of October, 2014 and 2013:

	End Oct 2014	End Oct 2013
Revenue		
- Envelope Givings	\$149,402	\$145,298
- Use of Building	\$91,171	\$117,178
- Fundraising & Other	\$50,526	\$43,920
Total Revenue	\$291,099	\$306,396
Expenses		
- Personnel Costs	\$194,339	\$224,524
- Property Costs & Other	\$79,037	\$78,653
Total Expense	\$273,376	\$303,177
Oper. Surplus	\$17,723	\$3,219
Mission & Service Givings	\$30,270	\$27,866
Outreach Givings	\$28,590	\$27,053
Reserve Funds	\$70,850	\$52,005

There is a lot of interesting information in the above chart. You can see that your givings to the church this year are better than last year so thank you for your continued support of the church. Use of Building revenue is down because of no parking revenue in 2014 from the construction to the east of us, and lower rentals from the YMCA. With the great results of our Bazaar this year (\$27,000), fundraising is up over last year. Personnel costs are down by \$30,000 because of reduced ministerial salaries that started in July. The result of this is that at the end of October, we have an operational surplus of \$17,723 this year compared to \$3,219 last year. The main reason for the increase is lower ministerial salary costs. This trend should continue to the end of the year and the Treasurer is predicting a year end surplus of around \$30,000. Last year's year end surplus was around \$3,000.

You continue your excellent support of both M&S and Outreach, again thank you.

Bazaar

- Dave Chaplin on behalf of the Bazaar Convenors

What a great time we had this year as our experienced team of convenors and table workers swung into action again! (Can you believe that as many as 225 Woodroffe community people participated this year?) Thanks to our being able to get a lot of table set-up completed on Saturday, October 17, sorting Sunday went very quickly and without a hitch. A busy week, with helpers sorting and arranging the mountains of contributions we received, resulted in one of the most relaxed pre-bazaar day Fridays in recent years. Saturday wasn't so relaxed, but in the end, all that effort yielded our best results ever, eclipsing the banner years of 2006 and 2010 and contributing over \$26,500 to the running of the church. Again this year, Bruce Patrick, Doug McKee and Dave Chaplin want to thank sincerely all those who helped in the Bazaar Marathon. It was fun and worth more than all the effort.

Bazaar Transformations

How has the Woodroffe Bazaar transformed you? Did you bring in more things than you took home? That is a great way to downsize, as many of you have done.

In the past decade, the Bazaar's ecologic footprint has been reduced considerably, with a lot of recycling to the city's green programs as well as to other agencies across the city. A number of shelters, for women, families and men, received bags of clothing and other articles of use. Although our daily contact with these agencies may be limited, you should know that our bazaar leftovers have new beginnings with those in need. This note of appreciation was received from one of these groups:

Dear Friends,

On behalf of the women and staff at Cornerstone Housing for Women, I would like to thank you for your recent donation. It is so much appreciated, and does help to enhance the lives of our residents.

Sincerely, Mollie, volunteer, for Connie Franklin, Resource Development Manager

But did you ever think that the *Silent Auction* could change someone's life? Two years ago, we auctioned off a guzheng, or Chinese harp, to a woman who had never played one. Last year and this year, she has returned for the bazaar and told how that harp has changed her and her husband's lives. They bought a second guzheng and both take lessons weekly. Those of you who make music in any way, even if this is only singing in the shower, will appreciate the profound impact that music has on us—physically, mentally and spiritually. Through a chance bid on an auction item, this couple shares that experience.

Advent Retreat for Women

- Eileen Lavigne, Chair, Worship Committee

This is an invitation to all women to join us on Thursday, December 11 in the Sanctuary for a special activity—"Advent Retreat for Women". The event will be from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM. This will give us all a few hours together to push away the businesses of this time of year and think about WHY we have Advent and what we are preparing to celebrate. We'll do this by worship, crafts and sharing our hopes.

You are requested to bring the following items: a bag lunch, scissors, tape or glue and coloured markers. I would appreciate hearing from anyone who would be willing to assist with the reading parts that day. Please speak to me at church, call me at 613-729-6307 or send an e-mail to me at elavigne@rogers.com.

A Time of Change

These are interesting times for our church. Most of you will know that, after Jan's retirement, a Joint Needs Assessment Process (JNAP) was followed and a report was accepted by the congregation at a special congregational meeting. From this, a Joint Search Committee (JSC) was formed to seek one full-time minister and one quarter-time minister. The JSC has been meeting frequently and the positions have been posted in the church bulletin of Sunday November 14, here in The Uniter and a few other places.

The first position being posted is for an experienced full-time Ordained Minister who will be primarily responsible for Word, Sacrament and Pastoral Care. Pastoral care responsibilities will be shared with the quarter-time Minister of Pastoral Care. The second position is for a quarter-time Ordained or Diaconal Minister of Pastoral Care. The latter will have chief responsibility for pastoral care and provide assistance in Sunday worship.

Worship Committee

- Eileen Lavigne

The Worship Committee welcomed three new members to their committee this fall: Linda Jackson, Kira Mathers and Suzanne Israel. They are a welcome addition to this committee. Bulletin Sponsorship will be handled by Suzanne starting December 1.

Guess Who's Coming to Dinner

This year's Guess Who's Coming to Dinner event has been postponed to spring 2015. For those who have never attended, here is how it works. People gather together at the church for punch and hors d'oeuvres, then pick an invitation containing an address and a map. When they arrive at their dining destination, they find out who their host and dinner companions are. It's a fun evening and a great way to get to know new people.

If you think you might like to host a dinner, please get in touch with Shirley Hockin at 613-729-0073.

Choir and Music

- Iain McGilveray

If you look at the calendar on the website you will see that the Sanctuary is booked for many Christmas Concerts in late December through to Christmas and the space will be filled with joyous music. The choir (and some friends) have been working hard at Thursday rehearsals for the joint concerts with the Choir and Strings of St. John (Church of St John the Evangelist, Elgin/Somerset) being performed at Woodroffe on Saturday December 6 (7:30 p.m.) and at St. John's on Sunday, December 14 (2:00 pm). The central piece is Vivaldi's joyous *Gloria*. We hope it will be as successful as our collaboration with the same groups last Christmas.

Concert tickets are \$20. Tickets for the pre-concert turkey dinner (5:30 pm on December 6) are available in the church office for \$15.

Other Christmas music is being prepared, such as for Lessons & Carols on December 7 and, of course, for Christmas Eve.

A number of outside groups have concerts in the coming month. These are listed on the church web site under Calendar-Events. One concert that will be of particular interest to the Woodroffe family is on November 29 (7:30 pm). Our own Choir Director, Katerina Jovic, directs a Serbian women's choir (*Musica Serbica*), in their inaugural performance. They will perform a mixture of Serbian folk songs and medleys of ABBA and Beatles tunes. Tickets: Adults 15, Students and Seniors \$10, Family \$25.

Decking the Halls

- *Kringen Henein*

One of our favourite Christmas traditions involves decorating our houses, offices and places of worship with greenery. From wreaths to holly and mistletoe to evergreen boughs to trees of spruce, fir or pine, we literally bring the outside inside.

Do you ever think about where this tradition comes from and why it persists? After all, Christmas trees are expensive and real pine boughs are messy. But somehow it wouldn't seem like Christmas in our part of the world without them.

These traditions have pagan origins and predate Christianity. Evergreen plants reminded northern people that even in the darkness of the winter solstice, spring would come again. Holly and pine boughs were a way of defying the retreat of the light and provided a happy contrast to the bleak leafless trees outside. The solstice was a time of festivity and promises of the return of the light. It is not a coincidence that we celebrate the birth of Christ during this period

Mistletoe and holly are very old symbols of eternal life. The Druids of ancient Britain cut them and hung them inside at the time of the solstice, along with evergreen boughs that were thought to ward off evil spirits. These symbols are equally meaningful to Christians celebrating the birth that promises light and eternal life.

The first cultures to bring whole trees inside the house were the Scandinavians and Germans, who began the tradition in the Middle Ages. There is a legend that tells how Martin Luther brought a little fir tree home, put candles on it, and lit the candles for his children in honour of the Christ Child.

The wreath, which is a circle of evergreens, is also an ancient seasonal symbol and represents eternal life – life that persists despite the fading sun and the starkness of winter, life that is renewed in Christ, life that has no beginning and no end. Four candles were sometimes placed on wreaths by pagans and lit at the midwinter celebrations to represent the four ancient elements: earth, air, fire and water. Four candles are lit in our Advent season to represent peace, joy, hope and love.

There is another reason why I believe having greenery around us persists at this time of year. It makes us feel good. Many scientific studies have shown the benefit of exposure to nature for our psychological wellbeing. People who can see trees from their hospital rooms heal faster than those seeing only a brick wall. People with access to natural areas to walk in near their homes are healthier and happier. Perhaps there is ancient wisdom involved in the practice of surrounding ourselves with greenery during the Christmas season. So go ahead, deck the halls and have a merry Christmas!

Passages

There was one death since the previous Uniter: Alex MacLeod, on October 14.

Four new members were welcomed on September 28: Joanne Baker, Erin Bruce, Joan Conrod and Suzanne Israel.

WUC Uniter November 21, 2014

Editor: Iain McGilveray
Advisory committee: Shannon Avery,
Matt Gallinger, Allison Hockin, Jamie Hockin,
Sue Smarkala

The Uniter is also available, with some additional content, on the church web site. While you are there, have a look at other news and the most current calendar of events.

Point your browser to woodroffeunited.org

Ed. note: The following article was lost in email and not received in time for the print edition.

Christmas *CareNotes*

- Your Pastoral Care Team

The Advent and Christmas Seasons are a time of joy for most of us, a time for celebrating with friends and family. Unfortunately, this is not the reality for everyone. For some, the season can be a painful reminder of loss, whether recent or longstanding. Our annual Kindle a Flame, to be held this year on December 7, service is one attempt which we make as a congregation to recognize and minister to this experience.

Another way in which we try to help is by providing a specific selection of *CareNotes* which address the many ways in which the season can difficult. These notes will be displayed throughout the Advent/Christmas season on the *CareNotes* rack in the Narthex (across from the office). There are well over a dozen different titles both on the rack and the shelf below. Please feel free to take as many as you like either for your own use or for a friend or loved one.