



# THE GOOD NEWS LETTER

FROM ST. JOHN'S STEVENSVILLE UNITED CHURCH

ISSUE: NOVEMBER 2020

Dear Sisters & Brothers in Christ;

We are drawing close to the end of a very strange year. Circumstances changed quickly as we were thrown into a world-wide pandemic, but we learned to cope and adjust and continue on with the pieces that mattered most in often inventive news ways, which was both at times exciting and incredibly exhausting. Yet through it all we have remained faithful to the hope which is in us, the Christ who redeemed us and the Holy Spirit who sustains us. We worshipped online. We produced more newsletters and did our best to deliver them personally. We gathered the appropriate way, social distanced in our driveways and backyards to visit. We broadcasted prayers and sang in our parking lot. We installed safety features that allowed us to reopen in-person worship, even though we are still restricted to 1/3 use of the Sanctuary. A lot of people have put in a lot of work to keep St. John's Stevensville United Church operating!

However, just as we have been forced to make adjustments and think creatively during the past months, we continue to think creatively and make adjustments going into the High Holy Seasons of Advent and Christmas. We will have a Sunday School Pageant, but it will be pre-recorded in parts, and sewed together digitally. We will have a Cantata this year, but most people will watch it online. And we will have a Christmas Eve Worship Service, we will have two worship services in fact, BUT we will need to restrict attendance to stay within the provincial Covid-regulations. That means we will need to do something we would never have even considered doing before, and that is take reservations. We will have tickets for the two services in order to safely accommodate as many folks as possible (to a max of 40 at a time), and when the reservation space are gone, they are gone. Now fortunately we will also be broadcasting live over our niagaraonlineworship.com handle. And we pray that this will be the only year that we will need to such a strange action.

The way this will work is that you will need to email me at [rev.cheryl.wood@gmail.com](mailto:rev.cheryl.wood@gmail.com) and tell me:

- 1) Which service, the 6:00pm or 8:00pm, you wish to attend?
- 2) How many people from your family are attending?
- 3) Is there another family attending who is in your social bubble with whom you would share a pew?

Emailing is the easiest way for us to keep track of the requests, but we also realize that some folks do not have access to the internet, so please also feel free to phone the church and leave a message. 905-382-3344

*Blessings in this Season of Hope,*

*Rev. Cheryl Wood-Thomas*



LOVE GOD... LIVE JESUS

# Advent At The Embrace

*Rev. Bill Thomas*

“Let’s put Christ back in Christmas!”

When people say this to me and I ask them what they mean, they usually say something like, “I want to be able to wish people Merry Christmas!” or “Why can’t our schools have a Christmas Pageant?” or a similar concern at not being able to name Christ or to speak of Jesus’ birth as central to Christmas.

This year at The Embrace Centre, during the season of Advent we will be participating in The Advent Conspiracy. We will be studying the book by the same name (you can get the book from Rev Cheryl or Rev Bill for \$10). The Advent Conspiracy asks the question, “Can Christmas still change the world?” and, suggests that the way we put Christ back in Christmas is to challenge the rampant consumerism that has become part of our preparation and celebration of the season. The way to put Christ back in Christmas is to substitute consumption with compassion, to replace presents with presence, and to not only be different but make a difference.

The book is divided into four sections:

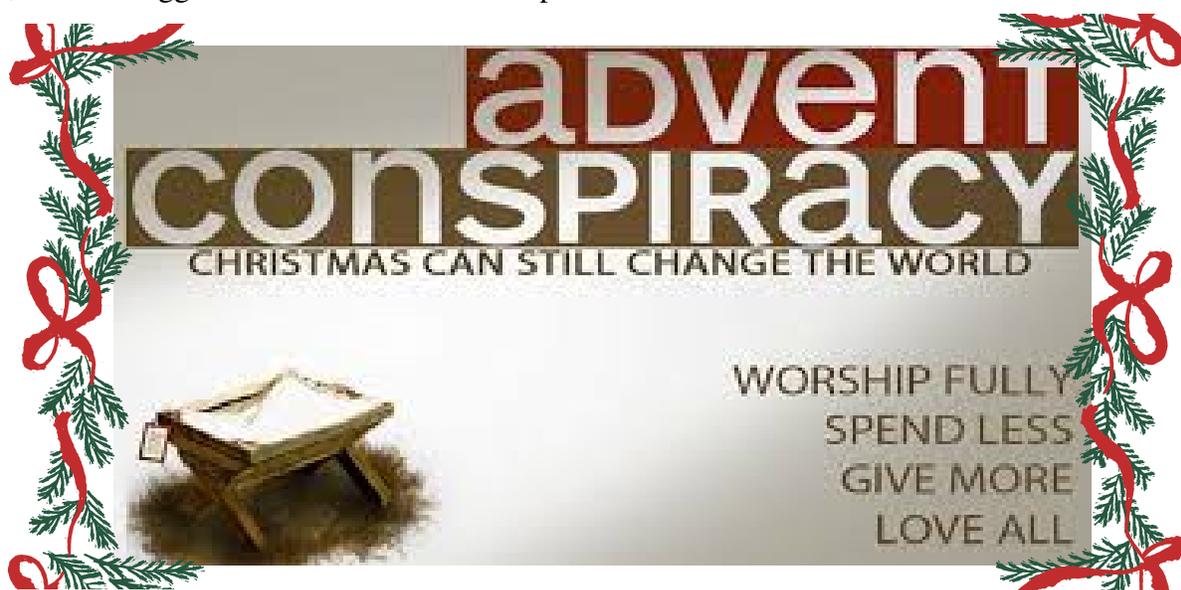
Worship Fully – because Christmas begins and ends with Jesus

Spend Less – and free your resources for things that truly matter

Give More – of your presence: your hands, your words, your time, your heart

Love All – the poor, the forgotten, the marginalized, the sick, in ways that make a difference

We will use the four chapters as our focus for each week, beginning with the content of the book but thinking about how we can put each of the themes of the chapters into practice at the church and The Embrace Centre. On the back cover of the book the authors answer the earlier question. Yes, “Christmas can still change the world when you, like Jesus, give what matters most – your presence.” And, I would suggest that that is how we will put Christ back in Christmas.



## From The Finance Committee

- Terry Metcalf



It's been over a month since St John's has resumed in person church services along with our online broadcasts and we are slowly seeing our recovery from the earlier shutdown and the impact that had on the church's finances. Our services would not have been possible without strong financial support of the members of St. John's Stevensville United Church and others through their continued giving during these turbulent times. The Finance Committee wishes to express our gratitude by giving a big shout out for those giving's made through PAR, on-line via

CanadaHelps.org (search for St John's Stevensville) and your regular envelope giving now that we are able to meet in person once again. It is this generosity that has helped to keep our congregational finances on the plus side of the ledger. Thank you again and we look forward to your continued generosity during Advent. And remember for your donations to be tax receipted in the current year they must be received by December 31st, 2020. Please stay healthy and stay safe.

## Longest Night Service

The Christmas Season is different for everyone. For some people, it is a time of longing, of mourning, and of grief. Join Rev. Bill during his Longest Night Service (sometimes also called the Blue Christmas Service) to honour those who we wish could be with us this season. Light a candle for your loved one and know that you are not alone.

**Dec. 21st, 2020**

**7:00pm**

Friendly reminder that a mask is required to attend this service, and all social distancing regulations will be in effect.



## Journey Through Bethlehem



### **In Search of our Kneeling Places (By Ann Weems)**

In each heart lies a Bethlehem,  
An inn where we must ultimately answer  
Whether there is room or not.

When we are Bethlehem-bound  
We experience our own advent in his.  
When we are Bethlehem-bound  
We can no longer look the other way  
Conveniently not seeing stars  
Not hearing Angel voices.

We can no longer excuse ourselves by busily  
Tending our sheep or our kingdoms.

This Advent let's go to Bethlehem  
And see this thing that the Lord has made  
known to us.

In the midst of shopping sprees  
Let's ponder in our hearts the Gift of Gifts.

Through the tinsel  
Let's look for the gold of the Christmas Star.

In the excitement and confusion, in the merry  
chaos,

Let's listen for the brush of angel's wings.

This Advent, let's go to Bethlehem  
And find our kneeling places.

To start off advent this year, we will be holding a "Journey Through Bethlehem." This event will be a series of nativity scenes laid out across the sanctuary and hall to create a journey that you may walk with the family of Christ.

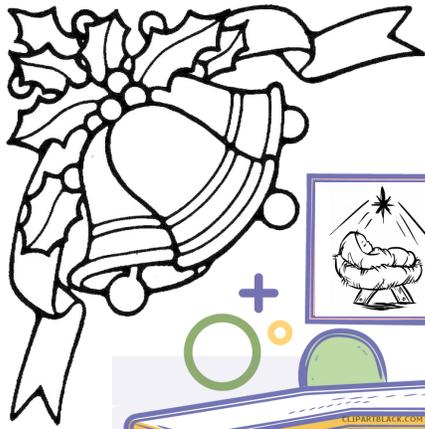
**Wed. Nov. 25 - Sat. Nov. 28**

**1:00 - 3:00pm &  
6:00 - 8:00pm**

Please note that all social distancing rules and regulations will be strictly in effect. Hand Sanitizer will be available at the entrance and exit of the display, and masks are available should you not have one upon arrival.

Along with the walk, the UCW will be providing refreshments to go, and a selection of Christmas Gift Baskets will be available for purchase in the Morningstar Gallery.

If you would like to contribute a Nativity set to the event, please drop off by Nov. 22 (with your name clearly marked on the box) and pick up again on Nov. 29th. Discuss with Rev. Cheryl if you have any questions.



## Christmas Pageant

### Where's The Baby?

This years Christmas Pageant is coming to you through the WMICE News Net! On Dec. 6, 2020, tune in (and come to church) for the breaking news segment around the birth of a Saviour!

All of our Sunday School kids will be recording individual pieces throughout November. Together, these pieces will create a short breaking news segment as we try to find out where the baby and his family ended up last night.

Recording sessions are available to sign up (to make sure we don't have too many people in the church at a time) so email Victoria or Rev. Cheryl to sign up for your time slot.

Thank you to everyone who is helping, and advance thanks for those who don't know I'm going to recruit them yet. Special thank you to John Bedell, for helping with the blue screen "News room," and all of the other cool stuff he does for us!

## What's Going On? So Much!!

Mark your calendars, folks, we have a lot happening!

- Tuesday, Nov 24 th – Advent Conspiracy Bible Study at the EMBRACE, 1:30pm – 2pm
- Wednesday, Nov 25 th – Saturday 28 th - Journey Through Bethlehem Nativity Display at SJS, 1pm – 3pm and 6pm – 8pm.
- Sunday, Nov 29 th - ADVENT #1
- Tuesday, Dec. 1 st - Advent Conspiracy Bible Study at the EMBRACE, 1:30pm – 2pm
- Sunday, Dec. 6 th – ADVENT #2 – Virtual Sunday School Pageant
- Tuesday, Dec. 8 th - Advent Conspiracy Bible Study at the EMBRACE, 1:30pm – 2pm
- Sunday, Dec. 13 th – ADVENT #3
- Tuesday, Dec. 15 th - Advent Conspiracy Bible Study at the EMBRACE, 1:30pm – 2pm
- Sunday, Dec. 20 th - ADVENT #4 – Choir Cantata (Silent Was The Night)
- Monday, Dec. 21 st – Longest Night Service at 7pm
- Thursday, Dec. 24 th – Christmas Eve Services at 6:00pm & 8:00pm (**reservations needed**)
- Sunday, Dec. 27 th – Carols & Lessons



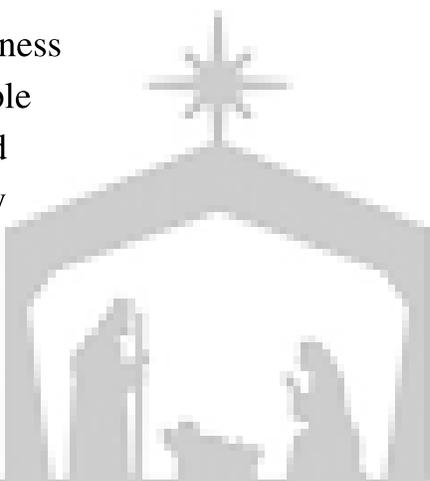
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Advent  
 Christmas  
 Messiah  
 Isaiah  
 Angels  
 Baby Jesus

Voice in the Wilderness  
 Comfort My People  
 Joy to the World  
 Prepare the Way  
 Jerusalem  
 Bethlehem

Mary  
 Joseph  
 Salvation  
 Star  
 Shepherds

Donkey  
 Silent Night  
 Faithfulness  
 Prophecy  
 Gifts



## Some Mental Health Tips From the Canadian Mental Health Association

Seek extra help or support when you need it.

People feel anxious about the future at the best of times, and many people have never encountered a pandemic like this before. It's okay if you need help.

- Considering the level of attention and seriousness being paid to the COVID-19 pandemic, it's normal to feel anxious. Try not to avoid, ignore or suppress anxious thoughts. Instead, be aware of your anxiety and accept that you're feeling anxious in this situation. Try to keep things in perspective; notice and challenge your thoughts that may be extreme or unhelpful.
- Self-care is critically important at this time, as worries can be made worse if we aren't taking care of ourselves. Lean on social supports, try to get enough sleep, eat healthy, exercise and engage in enjoyable activities. Do the things you would typically do to support your health, and be sure to use caution and follow health and safety guidelines while doing them.
- Seek information from reliable news sources only. Limit checking in on the latest news to short, defined periods, and refrain from setting related push notifications on your device. Appropriate information consumption may be calming and can lessen the sense of danger.
- Take the recommended precautions as outlined by Health Canada and other credible health agencies. Remain focused on the factors within your control, such as washing hands, covering your mouth during coughs and sneezes, avoiding non-essential travel, etc.
- If you're noticing that your symptoms of anxiety (in association with COVID-19 or otherwise) are causing you significant distress or are interfering with your ability to function normally, reach out for formal mental health supports.

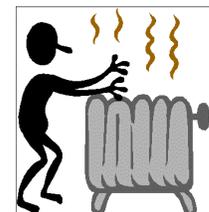
## Announcements



HELP, HELP, HELP...

We really love our Tech Guy, John, and we don't want to see him get burned out, so if you are able to give him one week a month to help with the AV duties it would be much appreciated. Go have a chat with John to see what that might entail

The Property Committee saw to the replacement of two of the heating units on top of the building in October. The Sanctuary and the Office are now toasty warm as we go into the winter season.



Just a friendly reminder that 2020 is coming to a close. For those of you wishing for a tax receipt for the 2020 year - all funds must be forwarded and received by the church by December 31, 2020.



Mittens for the Mitten Tree can be left at the back of the sanctuary, and someone from the Worship Committee will hang them following the service.



# THE GOOD NEWS LETTER

FROM ST. JOHN'S STEVENSVILLE UNITED CHURCH

QUARANTINE ISSUE: SEPTEMBER 2020



## Ongoing Events!

Take a look at these events, happening every week!

Sunday @ 11am - Church Services (Bring your mask and maintain social distancing)

Sunday @ 11 am - Online Church Services

Tuesday @ 1pm - Bible Study at the Embrace Center

Thursday @ 1pm - Creative Spirit Zoom session

Wondering where our streamed sessions can be found? Check out the following:

-  [www.stjohnsstevensvilleunitedchurch.com](http://www.stjohnsstevensvilleunitedchurch.com)
-  St. John's Stevensville United Church
-  The Embrace Center
-  [www.niagaraonlineworship.com](http://www.niagaraonlineworship.com)

We understand that it can be hard when we are all isolated. So please keep in mind that both Rev. Bill and Rev. Cheryl are available to provide pastoral care over the phone at any time. Do not hesitate to call.

### **I wear my mask in public for three reasons.**

- 1.** Humility: I don't know if I have COVID as it is clear that people can spread the disease before they have the symptoms.
- 2.** Kindness: I don't know if the person I am near has a child battling cancer, or cares for their elderly mom. While I might be fine, they might not.
- 3.** Community: I want my community to thrive, businesses to stay open, employees to stay healthy. Keep a lid on COVID helps us all.

## Contact Us

**St. John's Stevensville United Church:**

14789 Sodom Road  
PO Box 267  
Stevensville, ON  
L0S 1S0  
905-382-3344

**Rev. Cheryl Wood-Thomas:**  
905-6872664  
[rev.cheryl.wood@gmail.com](mailto:rev.cheryl.wood@gmail.com)

**Rev. Bill Thomas**  
289-213-3153  
[rev.bill.thomas@gmail.com](mailto:rev.bill.thomas@gmail.com)