



# THE GOOD NEWS LETTER

FROM ST. JOHN'S STEVENSVILLE UNITED CHURCH

ISSUE: OCTOBER 2021

## The Season of Advent

- Rev. Cheryl Wood-Thomas

“Angels from the realms of  
glory, wing your flight o'er  
all the earth;  
Ye who sang creation's story,  
now proclaim Messiah's  
birth.  
Come and worship, come  
and worship; worship Christ,  
the newborn King.”



Advent is only a few weeks away, and to prepare our hearts for the season we are going to have an “Angel Walk”, that is a display of angels set up in the sanctuary from Thursday, November 25th until Saturday, November 27th. The experience can be used as a quiet space for meditation for those who need the quiet time to reflect. The experience can also be a social time for others to enjoy with friends who simply want to view and enjoy the display.

As you move from the sanctuary to the hall, you will find a marketplace of Christmas baskets and goodies sponsored by the United Church Women's group. And then you will exit through the Gallery where we will present a display of thematic art done by folks from our faith community.

We are hoping to gather as many Angels as possible to make this a meaningful event, so if you have one, or two, or ten to share, they can be dropped off at the church on either Sunday the 21st or Monday the 22nd (please make sure your name is on the angel), and then pick it up after worship on Sunday the 28th / Advent #1.

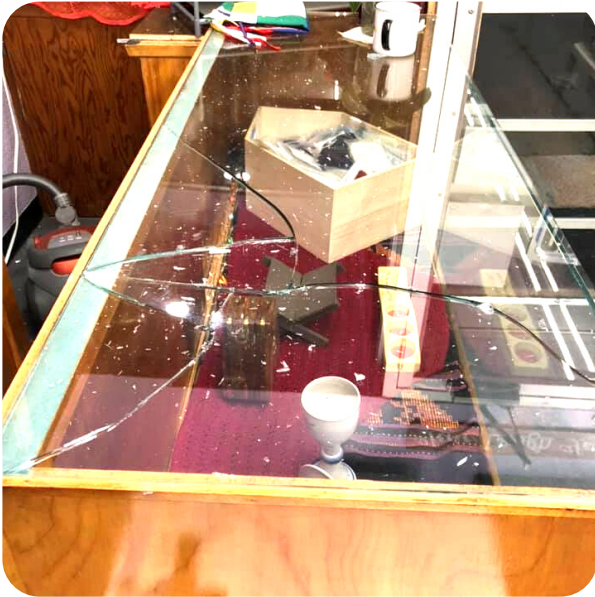
Let's make this a successful event as we open our doors to the wider community and get to know each other better. Proof of double vaccination is required for the Angel Walk event.

LOVE GOD... LIVE JESUS

# Embracing Our Call To Difficult Ministry

- Rev. Bill Thomas

As Covid restrictions are loosened and we are once again able to gather together, (with precautions), the outreach ministry at The Embrace Centre is picking up again. We are open Monday to Thursday from 10:00 until 3:00 for drop-ins and there are evening events as well, including the recently started Youth Group that meets on Wednesday evenings at 6:00. We have also started a Tuesday community meal ministry called Food For The Body (and The Soul). .



With the changing of the seasons and important events in the community, we try to change the displays in the large front windows that look out onto Jarvis Street, including a television screen that has a constant stream of what is happening at both The Centre and the church. When the federal government instituted September 30th as a statutory holiday, A Day of Reflection on Truth and Reconciliation, I decided that our window display would focus on that theme. The week prior to September 30th, I built an "Orange Shirt Day" display in remembrance of the children who had been removed from their communities and taken to Residential Schools, particularly the children whose unmarked graves have been located on the grounds of some of those schools.

Late one night, just days before September 30th, we were awakened by police officers at our home asking me to go down to Jarvis Street. Someone, they said, had thrown a large rock through the window. It turns out there were two people and they did indeed throw a large rock breaking the window, the television and the top of a glass display cabinet. I do not know the motivation behind this attack but, it does seem an odd coincidence that it happened just days after the Orange Day display was put in the window.

Of course, this is not the first time The Centre has been vandalised. Two years ago pellets had been shot through the other window after we put a PRIDE flag up along with signs informing people that we are a "Safe Space." On that occasion, we were not the only storefront damaged as other LGBTQ+ positive businesses were also targeted and a woman was also injured as she exited The Bell Centre.

The window has been repaired and the television is being replaced. The reality is that we are trying to bring a positive Christian presence to Jarvis Street. We are doing good work, good ministry. But, we are also raising important and sometimes difficult issues, issues that make people uncomfortable, even angry. I ask you to pray for our ministries, pray for the people who come through our door, pray for the people whose lives we are trying to impact through our ministries and our advocacy and, pray for the people who threw the rock through our window.





# Vacation Bible School Report



The vacation bible school theme for 2021 was Knights of the North Castle, and it was a roaring success! Despite the hardships of the last year, with Covid-19 making everything uncertain, we were able to present a program that both kept everyone safe as well as keeping with the real spirit of fun that a VBS should have. We presented the program a little differently this year, with the sessions being held once a week and in the evening. This was sort of a big chance, but it had a few positive effects. For one, the children were able to have something to look forward to each week, something that they could plan for. It let the excitement build instead of having the week over and done with fairly quickly. Two, it allowed us to leave the materials and furniture untouched for a full week, to ensure we were following our Covid-19 protocols. Lastly, it gave the volunteers a chance to catch their breath between sessions, as the VBS programs tend to be incredibly high energy.



We had a total of 18 children registered for the church, with an average of 11 attending at a time. Of the total registered, 6 fell into the 4-7 age group, and 12 fell into the 8-12 age group. Personally, I found this surprising, as I would expect there to be more in the younger group than the older. But I am glad they all attended and seemed to enjoy themselves nonetheless.

As for volunteers, we had a good turnout of people willing to volunteer with the VBS program. From registration, crafts, small group leaders, and more, we had an average of 8 adults on site each week. I would like to send a huge thank you to all of those who helped make the program run smoothly. I couldn't have done it without you!



We spent the month talking about the Armour of God, and the banner verse "Be Strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his Power!" (Ephesians 6:10). We looked at the stories of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, Jesus, David, Goliath, Paul and Silas. We built our own armour to remind us that God protects us and never lets us down.

It was lots of fun, and I can't wait to see what next year has in store for us!





## Boo at the Zoo

~ Rev. Bill Thomas

Four days, 10,000 people, 6,000 pieces of candy, 3 giraffes and 2 hippopotamuses. You guessed it ... Boo @ The Zoo.

Boo @ The Zoo is an annual event that marks the end of another season at Safari Niagara and, this year St John's Stevensville and The Embrace Centre had a booth where Rev Bill, Rev Cheryl, Victoria and a group of enthusiastic volunteers offered candy to costumed children, (and a few parents), along with information about the church and some of the events and happenings at both St John's Stevensville and The Centre. We also had a colouring table and a very informal poll throughout the four days that gave the children an opportunity to tell us whether they were feeling like a "Hungry Hippo," "Funky Monkey," "Lazy Lion," or, "Silly Goose."

When we first talked about participating, I imagined that I would wear a different costume each day, starting with Batman. But, the week before Boo @ The Zoo started, Rev Cheryl came home with a "gift" for me ... a hot dog costume. After some careful reflection, I decided to wear the hot dog on the first day and, it was a hit. A number of the children referred to me as the hot dog man and, I wore the costume every day I was there.

It was an excellent experience resulting in some very good conversations. One grandmother asked about baptism for her grandson. We had queries about weddings. Victoria was able to share information about the youth and children's ministry and a number of people picked up pocket prayer shawls and shared the story of why they needed it or, whom they were going to be giving it to.

In the end it was a very successful and worthwhile weekend. Thank you to members of the congregation, (and others) who volunteered their time and joined in the fun. I am pretty confident that Boo @ The Zoo will become a regular part of St John's Stevensville's list of activities, but I am not committing to bringing hot dog man back.

## Youth Group

~ Victoria MacDonald

Youth group has begun with a bang! Every second week we watch a movie from the Marvel Universe and discuss the process of *Following the Hero's Call*. On the off weeks, we get together for discussion and gameplay in an attempt to get to know each other better and feel more comfortable. The more we feel that we are welcome and accepted by one another, than the deeper we can delve into important matters that require us to all be present and respectful of each others opinions.

The kids that been showing up regularly have been absolutely wonderful during discussions, always providing insightful views into the conversation and sometimes adding comments that I, myself, had not considered. We have exciting things planned for the coming months, and into the new year. So keep an ear out for our big announcements!

If you know anyone who wants to spend time with us, we are at the Embrace Centre on Wednesday evenings from 6-8pm!

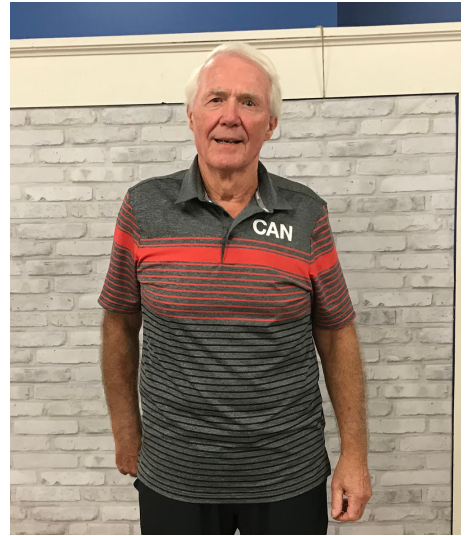




# Meet Scott Holmes!

- Rev. Cheryl Wood-Thomas

There is a new face at the church to welcome you when you drop by during the week. We are very happy to welcome Scott Holmes to our staff as the facility's Caretaker. Scott was one of the first people I met when our family moved to Ontario. Scott and Rev. Bill worked at the same pastoral charge, and during those early days when Rev. Bill and I shared one car while worked in different towns, and so often after a long workday, Scott would greet me with a smile and a cup of coffee while I waited for my husband to finish whatever he was doing so that we could head home. Recently I had the opportunity recently to "interview" Scott for this newsletter, and here are some pieces he shared as a way for us all to get to know him better:



## 1) *What is your favourite hymn?*

Trying to single out 1 hymn was difficult for me. The message and the music are what I gravitate to. Looking through Voices United I found #224 "Sing a Happy Hallelujah". The words are what I look for to make me smile inside and out.



## 2) *Who is your favourite hockey team?*

Chicago Blackhawks! I have been a Hawks Fan for as long as I can remember. Their Junior A Farm Team was based in St. Catharines for many seasons and I went to most of their games.



## 3) *Which Biblical character (other than Jesus) do you relate to most?*

A Biblical figure that I can relate to is John the Baptist. Visiting Israel for 3 days a few years ago with our friend and United Church Minister, Fraser Smith, I was fortunate to visit The River Jordan and experience an actual baptism in the river. John was one of Jesus' best friends as Fraser is to me. The Israel visit was a spiritual experience I will never forget!



## 4) *How long have you been a member of the United Church?*

I have been a member of the United Church for approximately 20 years. The Minister at Memorial United Church in St. Catharines, Reverend Fraser Smith, brought me back to the church through his friendly approach. He has remained one of my best friends!

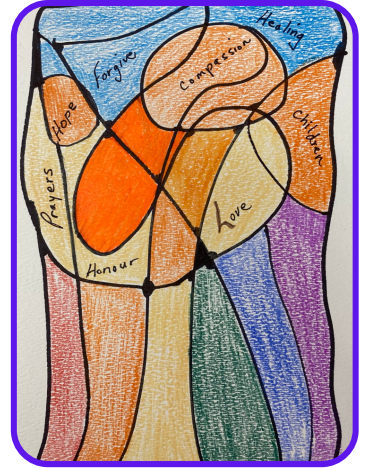


## 5) *Where is your favourite place you have travelled to?*

Travelling is something our family does on a regular basis. To pick one location is a difficult question. Each country offers so many different and unique cultural and scenic differences. Our 2 favourites are The Czech Republic & Italy.

## Creative Spirit Is Back!

~ Carolyn Campbell



At the time of writing, Thanksgiving weekend is upon us, and there are so many things to be truly grateful for. In particular, the faithful individuals who have continued to attend Creative Spirit online throughout the course of this pandemic. The great news is that we are now back, meeting in person at the Embrace Centre. It's incredible to believe that it has been 18 months since we last gathered at The Embrace.

We began in-person sessions this fall on Thursday, September 16, 2021. Even though Covid-19 protocols are in effect, it is wonderful to be amongst our Creative Spirit members in an artistic, prayerful community. We have had some of our creative expressions displayed in the windows of St. John's Stevensville and will be getting the window display updated very soon for Creative Spirit at Embrace.

Before you know it, we'll be reflecting on Halloween, All Saints Day, Remembrance Day, Reign of Christ, and just like that, we're into Advent with another wonderful installation for the Morningstar Gallery. If you're interested in coming out and worshipping God through art, contact: Carolyn Campbell at [creativespiritministry@gmail.com](mailto:creativespiritministry@gmail.com).

**We meet every Thursday @ 1:00 PM for a couple of hours, at The Embrace Centre, 14 Jarvis Street, Fort Erie**

## 7 Inch Squares: What are they for?

~ Rev. Cheryl Wood-Thomas

If you have ever dropped into the church on a Wednesday morning and heard the Nimble Thimble Ladies talking about 7-inch squares and wondered what in the world they were talking about??? Well wonder no longer... It is part of a volunteer program associated with the Juravinski Cancer Hospital and the Wellwood Centre, that the Nimble Thimbles have taken on a ministry.

The squares are knitted by individuals and groups in the wider community and are then delivered to the Centre where other volunteers put them together into afghans to be distributed to those experiencing a cancer diagnosis. Recently SJS delivered 600 squares to the Centre and was told that since the beginning of Covid 19, approximately 2400 afghans have been assembled and given away.



# The Other Half of "Truth and Reconciliation"

- John Bedell

This past September 30th, I thought it was important to mark the first ever Canadian "National Day For Truth and Reconciliation" by doing something tangible. It's great that there were so many orange shirts on display across Canada that day as a measure of how many people are interested in learning about, and acknowledging, the hard truth about our treatment of our indigenous brethren in this land. But "Truth" is only the first half of the equation; the other half is "Reconciliation". And that requires more than just study, it requires action.

So I was thrilled and honoured to be able to join a team again at the Habitat site at Neyaashiinigmiing (Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation), where they're building homes and touching families in a real, concrete way that gives those families one of the essential human rights: a safe, secure place to live. For me, that is what Reconciliation looks like.



## The Chosen Take 2

- Victoria MacDonald

We are back!! Beginning in the spring, we began Season 1 of a show called "The Chosen," and beginning Oct. 4th, we began Season 2! This show is a wonderful piece of work about the life of Jesus' early ministries and the relationships between the disciples as they learn how to accept the major life changes that Jesus is bringing to an unsuspecting world.

Season 2 began in Samaria, with a few of the disciples beginning to question the plan that Jesus is laying out, and wondering how they are supposed to help when Jesus isn't following those traditional rules that they've all grown up in. Jesus loves to mix it all up, as he said in Season 1... "Get used to different."



This time, we have put the zoom sessions aside to meet in person at the church and watch the show on the big screens at the front of the sanctuary. Rev. Cheryl pops some popcorn so that we can all have the full cinematic experience, and we settle in to watch. I suggest bringing some drinks and a blanket for full comfort. That's what I do! Afterwards, we all stay in our pews as Rev. Bill coaxes out some thoughtful discussion points. All in all, it is a great time of fellowship and learning while we fall in love with our gospels all over again.

If you're thinking it might be fun to join us, do it!! There is more than enough space!

We meet on Monday evenings at 7:00pm. Everyone is welcome, and encouraged! See you there!!!



## Christmas Celebrations and Covid-19 Restrictions



Please note that in order to accommodate as many Folks as possible within our Covid restrictions, the Christmas Cantata on Dec. 19th at 2:30pm, and the Christmas Eve Worship services on Dec. 24 at 6:30pm & 8pm, will require tickets. The tickets are free, but allow us to keep a close track of numbers. To reserve your spot, please email Victoria at [sjsprograms@gmail.com](mailto:sjsprograms@gmail.com)

## Would You Like To Be A Member of St. John's Stevensville United Church?

*~ Rev. Cheryl Wood-Thomas*

Everyone who gathers here is welcome to be a part of the worship life of the community and is encouraged to participate in the activities and programming, but you can also become a member of the church with your name added to the official roll. What is the difference? While everyone is welcome to participate in much of the life of the church, there are certain roles that are reserved for members, such as chairing committees and voting on spiritual matters and matters of governance.

A person becomes a full member through one of the following ways: adult baptism and profession of faith; or through confirmation (if the person was baptized as a child and has now reached the age of understanding); or through reaffirmation of Christian faith if the person has already been baptized and made a profession of faith at an earlier time. Folks who are coming to the United Church from a different Christian denomination usually do so through reaffirmation of faith.

The guidelines for memberships are laid out in the United Church Manual B.3.3 titled *Full Members of the Congregation*. A person becomes a full member of the congregation with the approval of the Church Council through the Worship Committee (or through a congregational vote at a general meeting). The Manual states that in order to become a full member, a person must have enough knowledge about the Christian faith and the United Church to make their commitment with understanding.

We will be having an afternoon workshop on Sunday, November 21st following worship with lunch included. Folks attending would then be welcomed into Membership on November 28th (Advent 1). If you are interested in attending the workshop, please register at: [sjsprograms@gmail.com](mailto:sjsprograms@gmail.com) before Wednesday, Nov. 10th





## Food for the Body and for the Soul

- Linda Gorham

This program through The Embrace Centre started on Tuesday, Sept. 21st, 2021. We plan to continue weekly until the end of December, at which time we will revisit the purpose and success of the program and determine its continuation.

As of today's date, October 10th, we have prepared and served 3 Tuesday luncheons, with volunteers from SJSU church making soup and sandwiches and serving the meals. Our aim is to involve and get to know our community, especially in the Jarvis Street "downtown" or north end area.

All are welcome: members of the business community, church friends and members, anyone on the street. We are excited to be offering this fellowship, and pray that as we are blessed, we may bless others, through our discipleship to Jesus.



**VEGETABLE  
SOUP AND A  
CHOICE OF  
SANDWICH!**

**EVERY  
TUESDAY!  
1130AM - 1PM**



## Kids Uke Club

- Carolyn Campbell

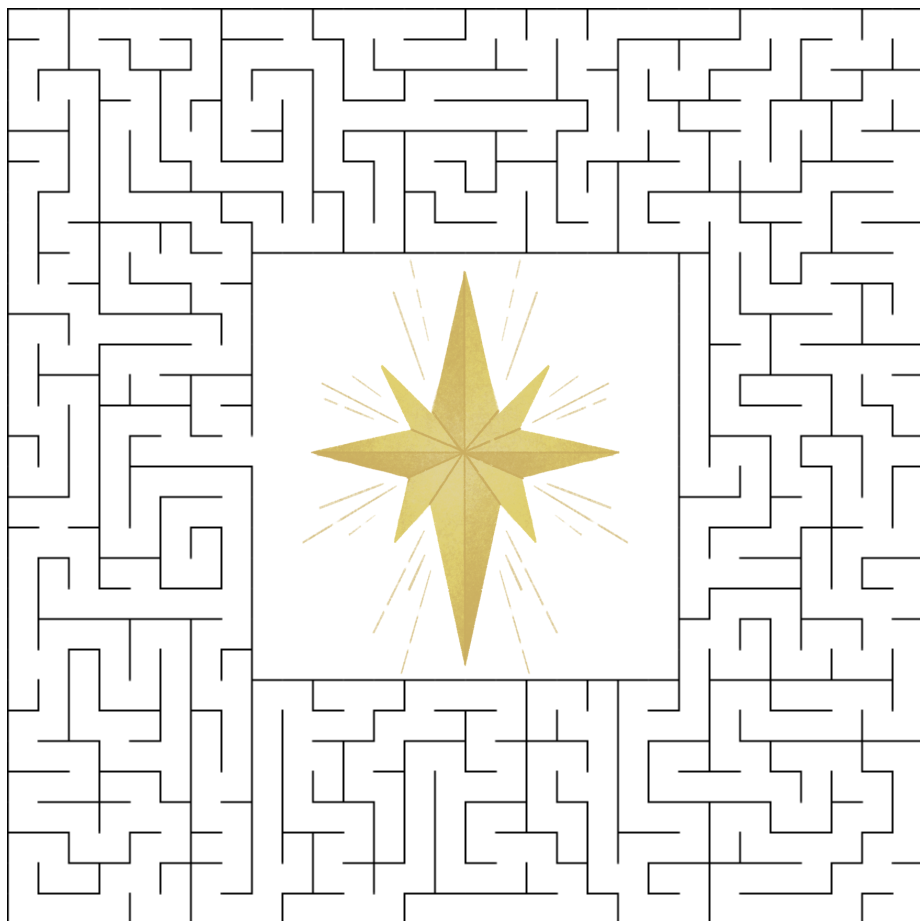


Thursday, September 16th saw the first gathering of the Kids' Uke Club at St. John's Stevensville. A group for children ages 8-12, that gives kids the opportunity to come out and learn how to play the ukulele in a fun, safe environment.

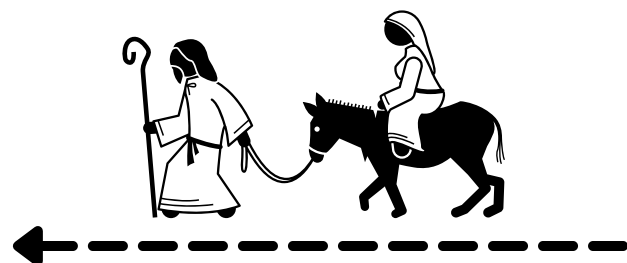
It may only be October, but our young musicians are strumming chords and singing along and creating their own lyrics to fun favourites such as "The Wheels on the Bus" and "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands". Strap on a shoe shaker bow and we're discovering where the beat is while hand held egg shakers are where the rhythm is at.

They're working hard and playing harder to start learning some Christmas songs too! Yes, it's true, Christmas Songs! Stay tuned for more information on your opportunity to hear our budding musicians share their Christmas Spirit in December.

## For Fun



IT'S TIME TO BEGIN OUR  
JOURNEY OF ADVENT.  
FOLLOW THE STAR!



Unscramble the themes for the  
four weeks of Advent:

EPOH: \_\_\_\_\_

CPEEA: \_\_\_\_\_

YJO: \_\_\_\_\_

VLEO: \_\_\_\_\_



## Have a Topic You Want to Add?

We want to hear from you! What sort of topic would you like to see in the next newsletter? Do you have a thought-provoking question that you want to pose to one of our Ministry team? Does your group or committee have something special they want to share with the congregation?

Let us know! This newsletter is a great way to share our word with each other, and all are welcome to contribute in whatever way you feel called to do!



## Announcements

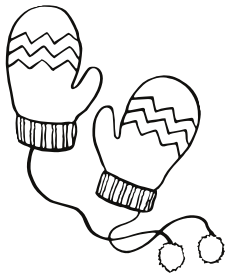
We are back to in-person worship!

After spending so much time online, we have now been able to move back into our lovely sanctuary. We are still asking people to maintain their distance and keep their masks on, but we are also welcoming you to stay after the service for fellowship time on the lawn!



Welcome to Mikayla Lines! Mikayla has stepped up to be our newest Sunday School teacher. She will be with us 3 weeks a month, helping to teach the youngens about following God. Thank you Mikayla!!

Remember Vacation Bible School? Well, we're coming back! On November 28th, at 6:00pm, we are welcoming back all of the Knights to the North Castle so that we can discuss the final story... The Journey Of Mary! We are going to gather our final piece of the Armour of God by creating our own *Shoes of Peace*. Keep an eye out for our awesomeness!!



It will soon be mitten tree time again! The tree will be set up in the sanctuary near the entrance to the hall. Children's mittens and gloves go off to local schools; adult gloves, socks and hats go to the EMBRACE centre, along with toiletries. Toys that are collected will go to the Stevensville Kinettes to be distributed to families in need. The tree will go up just before Advent, and the donations will be sent to the various distribution sites after Advent 2 on Sunday, Dec. 5.

The UCW is collecting gift baskets, and items for baskets to sell at the Christmas Marketplace in November. Please list what is in each basket. Gift baskets will be sold for \$25 and under. If you have any questions, please contact the UCW President, Phyllis at 905-871-5968



### Weekly Events

Monday: 9:30am - Food For The Body (and for the Soul) Prep  
7:00pm - The Chosen Watch Party

Tuesday: 11:30am - Food For The Body (and for the Soul) @Embrace

Wednesday: 9:30am - Nimble Thimbles  
6:00pm - Youth Group @Embrace

Thursday: 10:00am - Choir Practice  
1:00pm - Creative Spirit @Embrace  
4:00pm - Uke Club



Re-Affirmation Workshop: Nov. 21 @ 12:30pm  
Join Rev. Cheryl as she talks about the ins and outs of our national church and see what it means to be a full member of the United Church of Canada.

Have you been considering learning a new skill? Consider volunteering for the tech team with John Bedell! He has lots of fun tools that he is always willing to share and teach to whoever is interested!



Want to get your name on our address list? Just let us know! If you miss a newsletter, we can mail it right to you.



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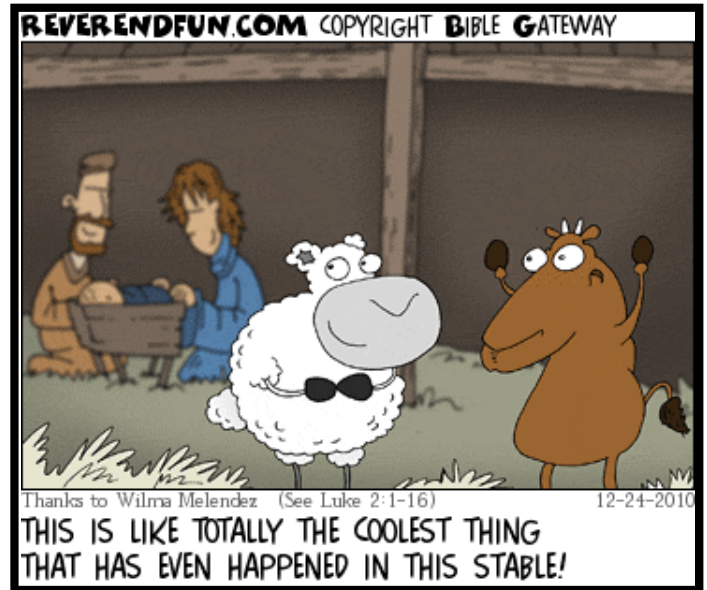
## Check Us Out

Come worship with us Sunday mornings at  
11:00am, in person or online at  
[www.niagaraonlineworship.com](http://www.niagaraonlineworship.com)

Embrace Center Drop In - Tuesday to  
Thursday, 11am-2pm

Wondering where to find out even more  
information about the upcoming events and  
ongoing activities;

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



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