

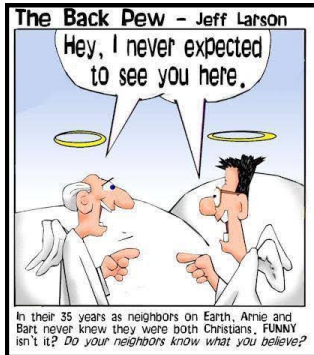
THE GOOD NEWS LETTER

FROM ST. JOHN'S STEVENSVILLE UNITED CHURCH
ISSUE: WINTER 2026



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Check Us Out

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

-  www.stjohnsstevensvilleunitedchurch.com
-  St. John's Stevensville United Church
-  The Embrace Center
-  www.niagaraonlineworship.com

Come worship with us Sunday mornings at 11:00am, in person or online at www.niagaraonlineworship.com

Embrace Center
Drop In - Monday to Thursday,
10am-4pm
Free Community Lunch - Tuesdays,
11:30am - 1pm

Contact Us

St. John's Stevensville United Church:

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

Rev. Dr. Cheryl Wood-Thomas:
905-6872664
rev.cheryl.wood@gmail.com

Rev. Bill Thomas
289-213-3153
rev.bill.thomas@gmail.com

LOVE GOD... LIVE JESUS

Why Vacation Bible School?

I love VBS, and I come from a family that loves VBS. A few years back, at my Sister Donna's funeral, my Sister Laurie talked about how Donna would get the younger kids up and dressed, and take them to church every Sunday. Whether they wanted to go or not! But Laurie's own love for church and Jesus came from the summer when Donna was teaching at VBS, and told her that she could help with the music if she learned to play the songs on the guitar. Self-taught, Laurie learned to play the guitar, (and pretty much any other instrument she ever picked up.) And now, even though she has been retired for a few years now, she still helps out with the VBS music every year at their church. This summer her granddaughter is the music leader with her. VBS is such a joy-filled way to learn about Jesus, and that impact stays with you throughout your whole life.



Many congregations are getting away from children and youth programming like Vacation Bible School citing the cost and time commitment required. And yet, quality programming is an investment in the future of the Christian Church at a time when we need to be thinking seriously about its future. As less and less folks attend church on a regular basis, the common stories of our faith are getting lost from the culture. And of course, as people of faith, these are more than just mere stories, but the foundation of our faith, the roots of our hope and peace, and the source of our joy. Jesus is not a mere interesting historical figure, but our Saviour and Friend.

Often when you ask a Minister where they first felt the call to go into ministry, they will mention, a VBS, or Camp, or Youth Conference. A safe space to explore their faith, ask their questions, and feel safe while also having fun. It can be an exhausting week for the workers, and the programs are not cheap, but when you hear the Kids singing the songs of the faith, and reciting the sacred scriptures, it is well worth the energy and resources.

~Rev Cheryl



“Untitled’ (unfinished)

A poem by Rev. Bill



Mountains in the distance rise
Above the mists of time.
Deepest greens ‘gainst greying skies,
Echoes of memories not my own.

The land of my mother,
And her mam before.
Left in her youth,
But never forgotten.
Bitterness takes hold
Where beauty once resided.



The dance of the swords,
The pipes on the glen,
The tartan
worn with determination and pride.
The pinks of the heather
the thistle’s purple head,
A rainbow of colour
Rich with the morning dew.



Why the memory, so distant?
How, the paradise lost?
To follow the dream of another,
In a country far beyond the horizon.

Understanding comes with every footstep.
Compassion with every beat of my heart.
The love once held in my mother’s hand,
now with my love resides.



EMBRACing The Fall... Read Ahead

September 6, 2026 **Embracing Sabbath Habits**

Matthew 18:15-20 Where two or three are gathered
Psalm 149 Sing to God a new Song (VU# 872)

OUR CALLING...

Thursday, Sept 10 – Official opening of the EMBRACE Centre

September 13: Programming resumes - **Embracing Justice**

September 20: **Embracing Humility**

September 27: Orange Shirt Day - **Embracing Reconciliation**

October 4: WORLDWIDE COMMUNION - **Embracing Community**

OUR RESPONSE...

October 11: THANKSGIVING - **Embracing Gratitude**

October 18: World Food Sunday - **Embracing Sustainable Practices / Creation**

October 25: REFORMATION Sunday - **Embracing “Semper Reformanda”**

November 1: **Embracing the Heritage of the Saints / Ancestors**

November 8: **Embracing Remembrance (Our History)**

November 15: **Embracing Remembrance (Our Future)**

OUR CELEBRATION ...

November 22: Reign of Christ - **Embracing Change**

November 29: ADVENT 1 - **Embracing Hope**

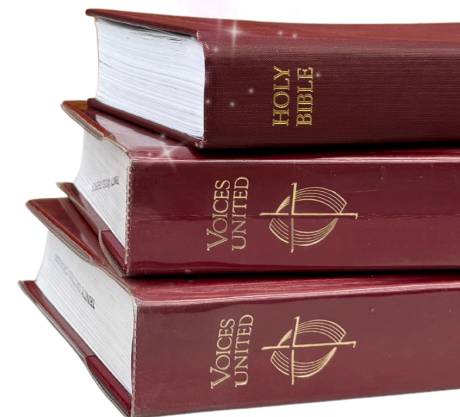
December 6: ADVENT 2 – **Embracing Peace**

December 13: ADVENT 3 – **Embracing Joy**

December 20: ADVENT 4 [Cantata] – **Embracing Love**

Monday, December 21: Longest Night Service – **Embracing Consolation**

Thursday, December 24: Christmas Eve Worship – **Embracing Jesus / Salvation**





Soft Open... Grand Opening To Come!



The Embrace Centre has officially finished its move from 14 to 240 Jarvis Street! Programs moved to the new space to finish off their season, but we're winding down for our month of sabbath. The lunch program that happens on Tuesdays has stayed strong, with 64 people attending on our first day open, and hovering just over 70 for each subsequent week.

With the new space comes more need for volunteers, and more opportunity for programming. Both of these topics are being explored as we speak and will be announced as details are cleared up. We will be hosting a Grand Opening of the new space on September 10th! This will be a chance for everyone to come out and see the new space in all its glory (with everything put away properly)!

Vista Dates for 2026

The Vista program at St. John's Stevensville is a passive fundraiser for the Youth Group, which offers the congregation a chance to purchase gift cards. There is a list of participating companies, who provide their cards at face value (meaning, if you order \$100, you get a \$100 card) but also provide a rebate to the Youth on top of that. These rebates range anywhere from 2 - 8% of the total ordered amount.

The money raised this way is specifically meant to help the youth go to programs and events OUTSIDE of our own, such as Rendez-Vous in St. Catharines, or Worshiplude in Ottawa. Traveling to other churches or other cities to participate can be a financial load, and our Vista program helps offset that load so that memories can be made, and not stressed over.

Thank you to everyone who has participated in the past, your help has been greatly appreciated! If you would like more information, or a form to see what companies are available, please talk to Victoria, or Rev. Cheryl.

The Vista Card fundraiser will be sending in orders on the

following dates:

Sept. 20 & Nov. 29

Order forms can be found outside the Sunday School room, or by talking with Rev. Cheryl / Victoria.



Prayer Walk Season



Our prayer walk season begins again with our first outing to take place at Heartland Forest Nature Preserve, located at 8215 Heartland Forest Rd, in Niagara Falls on Saturday July 18 at 10am till noon. This reflection time will be based on the theme of 'living free from anxiety' with Matthew 6:25-29 as a guide. After the walking-reflection time, we will meet up again as a group for a picnic lunch. Please dress for the weather, and bring your hat, water bottle, lawn chair and bagged lunch with you. The trails are accessible

and well maintained, and there are washrooms in the museum / café premises. All are welcome.

Other prayer walks include: Saturday, August 1st at Niagara Glen, and Sunday, September 13th at Dufferin Islands.

New Programming

The fall is coming, and with it comes the burst of exciting programs that we have to offer! That includes Creative Spirit, Youth Group, Fed By The Word, Nimble Thimbles, seasonal bible studies and more! But wait... there are new programs beginning as well!

Beginning in September 2026 we will also be hosting a Mother's Support group, a bell ringing choir, a weekly walking program and evening vespers.

If you would like to learn more about these programs, or are interested in being involved, just let us know! More information will come via email and Sunday morning announcements, so keep your ears open for details that might interest you!





Musical Update

This year has been a great year of musical activities at St. John's Stevensville United Church. Thank you to all for your support as my first year comes to a close (having started in early-July, 2025).

This spring, the St. John's Stevensville United Church presented a special performance "We Remember Calvary", an Eastertide choral cantata. There were 5 guest singers joining in with the St. John's Stevensville United Church Choir. The choir worked diligently on the music, and the performance was well-attended and supported by the local community. Thank you to all for your support of this project!

The choir rehearsals (held weekly on Sunday mornings at 9:45am-10:30am) are always a lot of fun. The choir comes with their singing voices and smiling faces and shares their joy of singing with each other. There is always room for more singers to join in; if you are interested in learning more, please send Ian an email to musicbyiangreeninc@gmail.com to learn more. A huge asset has been a useful resource Ian has created: all of the practice tracks for each anthem are available on his website. Choristers are welcome to rehearse on Sunday mornings as well as to take their music home and sing along with the practice tracks available online. To learn more, please connect with Ian, he would be happy to hear from you.

On special occasions, new hymns and pieces of special music were introduced within the worship services, and some of these hymns and special pieces have been added to the growing repertoire of congregational hymns we sing as a church community. More special music, new music, and familiar favorites are planned for this upcoming season(s).

One important date to mark in your calendars: the Advent Choral Cantata "A Thrill Of Hope" will be presented on Sunday, December 20 at 3pm. More details will come as we move toward this important date.

During this church year (September, 2025-June, 2026) the hand chimes have been embraced by the congregation. The choir faithfully supported this beautiful set of hand chimes and played them weekly. Thank you to the members of the choir that participated in this important music ministry. This was a good opportunity to share this music to help incorporate these instruments into the musical life of the congregation.



For this upcoming church year (September, 2026-June, 2027) Ian would like to offer an invitation to anyone in the congregation that would like to participate in playing the hand chimes. The goal is to encourage more members of the congregation to join in and play these beautiful instruments together. The more hands, the easier it will be to use these instruments. The goal will be to schedule a "Chimes Workshop" in September, 2026 to kick-off this new initiative, and also to offer a monthly rehearsal to maintain this important ministry. Dates for rehearsals will follow; more details will follow later in the summer, please stay tuned!

Thank you to all members of the choir, your faithful contributions are much appreciated. It is ALWAYS an enjoyable time working with you, and I am looking forward to another great year! The summer services will be a time of rest and reset while also worshipping God through songs of faithfulness, joy and praise. There will be some special music offered in the summer months in the format of solos, duets, trios, and quartets; stay tuned!

It has been a great first year working together with you as your Director of Music. Thank you for your continual support and enthusiasm. It will be a great summer of music, and I am very excited regarding the new things that are planned for the 2026-2027 church year!

Respectfully submitted:
Ian Green

