



Advent-Christmas 2022/2023

The Visitor

Official Newsletter of St. James United Church

ARISE *shine your* LIGHT HAS COME



Isaiah 60:1

This issue:

MINISTRY MESSAGE

Page 03

MUSIC NOTES

Page 05

SEASON OF GIVING

Page 06

GIFT OF DARKNESS

Page 07

FAMILY FUN

Page 10

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Page 12



Merry Christmas everyone.

It's that time of year when there's a chill in the air, but you feel the warm glow of the holidays.

There's lots going on for the Christmas season at St. James, so check the calendar inside so you can plan your weeks ahead.

Advent and Christmas is always a busy time, so take some time to centre yourself and breathe. Plan some time in your day to pause and reflect on what the season really means to you. It's the season of giving, but remember giving of yourself does not mean neglecting your needs.

We hope you have a joyous Christmas and a prosperous new year.

Sincerely,
Glen Warren, Editor

St. James United Church
330 Elizabeth Avenue
St. John's, NL A1B 1T9

Phone: 709-722-1881

www.stjamesuc.org

Ministers:
Rev. James Ravenscroft
Susan Sheppard, DLM



@StJamesUnited



st.JamesUC



StJamesUCNL

Worship with us!
Saturday, 4:30 PM
Sunday, 11:00 AM
EvenTide Service
Sunday, 7:00 PM



Ministry Message

James Ravenscroft

The earth has turned once more and here we are in this special time as the nights grow long and we are invited to slow down, entering the period of reflection and dreaming known as Advent. Now you would never realize this with how busy many of us get preparing for Christmas. In fact, many of us start to feel overwhelmed with how tight our schedules get even though the religious holiday doesn't arrive until the 24th of December. Sometimes the retail and social calendars seem to capture more of our attention.

There is a wisdom in the religious calendar, nevertheless, and so I encourage you to take into this year some of what we learned two years ago when pandemic restrictions forced us to pare down our usual festivities. Fewer parties and smaller guest lists for Christmas dinners added up to a much simpler and more meditative time than in previous years. This was relished by many of us, as we got the chance to slow down and appreciate the gift of this season. It had a practical aspect too. When we are tired and run down, we can get sick more easily, important to note with cases of COVID-19 going up again and indications that cold, flu and other respiratory viruses will be a big factor this winter. The season echoes the natural rhythm of the earth and of our bodies as well. Animals and plants which evolved in this part of the world use this time to rest, to recharge. This is needed in animals which are very active in warmer months. And though we can't see it, deep in the ground plants use this time of inaction above ground to strengthen their roots. Traditionally, humans have done this as well each winter, slowing down in order to pause and reflect on where we have been in preparation for the coming year.

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A generous person
will prosper;
whoever refreshes
others will be
refreshed.

Proverbs 11:25



Ministry Message

James Ravenscroft

We do just this as a faith community each Advent. We reflect on the story not just of Jesus' conception and birth but look back to the stories and events that long preceded his coming. This is why readings from the prophets take pride of place each Advent. We also lift up John the Baptist as he calls out to us to prepare the way of the Lord. This year we plan to give a Sunday each to Joseph and to Mary, hearing how they prepared for Jesus' coming. When we are attentive to the stories, we realize how much they take place in the night. In honour of this gift, we plan to start each Sunday morning worship service with a time of quiet as we reflect on the importance of the darkness, followed by the traditional lighting of the candles of the Advent wreath. This too celebrates the dark, even as it anticipates the lengthening of the days after the winter solstice.

Darkness and light are two gifts we celebrate at this time of year. It is all about prayerfully preparing our hearts as well as our homes for the celebration of the Christ Child's birth. And so though we may get busy, take time for prayer and reflection as a way to make room for his arrival. There are a few ways we can do just that. Perhaps you would like to mark each day with a bible reading. There are a number of lists with readings you can find online. In addition, Queen's College is offering video reflections for each Sunday. If you experienced loss of some kind during the year, the death of someone close to you, a health concern or other form of bereavement, it can be comforting to attend a Blue Christmas service. This year's joint Blue Christmas Service will be at Topsail United Church. Stay tuned for details. And, of course, there are our regularly scheduled services, first being our annual Winter Solstice Service in the evening on Wednesday, December 21, hosted by Wild Light Spiritual Oasis (the new name for our Forest Church group), then our two services on Christmas Eve, the Family Service at 4:30 pm and a Traditional Service with Communion at 7:30 pm, and for those who wish, there is a virtual Christmas Day service with readings and carols, rather than an in-person service at the church.

This is a special time of year. The growing darkness invites us to reflect as well as to celebrate. May we do just that, in the midst of the festivities, being sure to take a breath, making space in our hearts to receive the One who brings hope into the world. Blessings of that One, the Christ Child, be upon you!





MUSIC NOTES

Advent is a season that challenges us to wait, reflect and remain hopeful as we look forward to the good news of Jesus’ birth. As a musician, it can seem hard to find moments of peace and reflection during these weeks with the Music Team vigorously planning our many upcoming worship and community events. As always, I am incredibly grateful to Bob, our Associate Director of Music, and James for keeping me on task and organized as we navigate through this busy time!

St. James United is blessed with many people who are keen to share their musical talents with the congregation. Our four Sundays of Advent will showcase a variety of groups from the congregation: the “Pop-Up Choir”, the Senior Choir and the Contemporary Ensemble. Our afternoon Christmas Eve service will contain contemporary, lively musical arrangements, whereas the evening service will feel more traditional. Members of the congregation will hear “a little bit of everything” this season – traditional and contemporary; well-loved and brand new – as the Music Team aims to create worship services that reach out to a wide net of people.

Music has the ability to help us stay in the moment, and feel an inner peace and joy that is hard to find in our everyday busy lives. Over the coming weeks, I hope our music program allows you a few moments to simply “be still”.

Warm regards,

Amy Dalziel



Be still, and
know that

I am God.

Psalm 46:10

THE SEASON OF GIVING

As we are approaching the last month of 2022, I would like to let you know where we are financially to the end of October.

Revenue:

Collections	\$152,042
Other Revenue	\$34,279
Total Revenue	\$186,321

Expenses:

Church	\$81,698
Assessments	\$13,574
Committees	\$2,802
Salaries	\$152,126
Total Expenses	\$250,200

Net loss \$63,879

The Finance Committee would like to thank everyone that has helped in any way during 2022. Merry Christmas to you and your loved ones and all the best for 2023.

Jean Thompson

The holidays are a busy and stressful time for many. More so now than ever, we seem to be watching our pennies as the cost of living steadily increases. At Christmas, though, our thoughts fall on the needs of others instead of ourselves.

St. James has done this many times with supporting various causes such as Bridges to Hope, women's shelters, and helping out families in need.

In fact, the holidays are the perfect time to connect spiritual maturity about one's finances with the ministry capacity of the church. The majority of the funds raised for the church fall within the category of staffing and utilities, so it's easy to be complacent. But these givings help St. James' ministry by improving our online presence with better cameras and sound equipment.

Your continued support not only makes sure these programs thrive, but have the resources and personnel to continue to help the church grow.

Glen Warren



The Gift of **Darkness**

Each November and December we're told over the airwaves that "It's the most wonderful time of the year." I would agree but not for the reason they suggest. The time of year that the singer is thinking of is Christmas, but what I like is Advent. I appreciate the sense of waiting that goes with the prayers and readings of the season, especially from the prophets as they write of a future of peace, one that will be ushered in by the arrival of a child. As Christians we have interpreted these readings to speak of Jesus, the light of the world, whose birth we celebrate each December 25.

It makes sense for us to celebrate this impending arrival of the light at this time of year. After all the days have been getting progressively shorter the closer we get to the Winter Solstice on December 21. We all know what happens next. The days start to lengthen again as the earth's axis makes its annual shift and the sun's position relative to the earth moves northward again. By Christmas Day we already begin to notice the change.

Our language links darkness with sin

Given these associations, it made sense that our religious forebears decided to celebrate Jesus' birth not only when the nights are longest but as the days start to lengthen again. This is especially true when you realize that the gospel narratives about Jesus' birth use so much imagery of light and darkness, of night-time and the coming dawn. This is in turn matched in our worship services not only with readings and prayers but also our decorations, especially the Advent wreath.



And yet as we do this we need to exercise some caution. Very often we speak of how the light will eventually triumph, not in a natural rhythm with the dark also triumphing each year, but more with the inference that light is better than darkness. As a church that seeks to become anti-racist, you can see how problematic that is. Too often our language links darkness with sin, evil, ignorance and other negatives. And tragically these associations have been used historically to justify racial prejudice against peoples with darker skin, including the horrific practice of chattel slavery. This is a part of our own history as a church, bible verses used to perpetuate connotations of darkness with oppression rather than the truer reality that peoples with darker complexions were the ones being oppressed.



Besides, this tendency denies some essential truths about how the natural world works, there needing to be a balance of light and dark for us to be healthy and whole. Humans, along with all of the other animals, evolved on a planet that turns on its axis, giving us a rhythm of night and day. We need the night to rest. Our brains need sleep to cleanse itself of accumulating proteins as well as to emotionally defrag during our dreams. If you've ever watched your dog sleeping, you know they need the same. Plants too need darkness to be healthy, creating an important chemical that helps them cope with the strain of photosynthesis. They also do much of their growing at night. Seeds too need darkness to germinate. And when it comes to most fruit, it is generally true that the darker the colour the sweeter the taste.

As you can see darkness is a gift as important to us as is the light. What is a candle burning without it doing so in a darkened room, or the glow of fairy lights on a house if not at night? And how would the magi see the star without the inky dark of the sky? So let's pause this Advent and Christmas, making sure that we appreciate that the darkness as much as the light is what makes this the most wonderful time of the year.

James Ravenscroft

MERRY CHRISTMAS

On behalf of the
Administration and
Communications
Committee. I would like
to wish you all the
merriest of Christmases
and may God bless us all
with health and joy for
the year to come.

-Jennifer Adams

Memory Christmas Tree

At this time of year, thoughts of our loved ones are never far from our minds. For a donation, a coloured bulb will be changed to white, remembering those who have passed. We also may have happy memories which we want to acknowledge.

The money raised through your gift helps fund the many projects which make St. James the vibrant faith we love. Please send your request and donation by Friday, December 16, for inclusion in the Christmas Eve bulletin insert. Multiple requests are accepted. Contact the office for donation forms.

Friends, Fellowship, and Fun Valentine's Day Fundraiser Friday, February 10, 2023

After a three-year hiatus, it's coming back! Warm your hearts and bodies in the middle of winter! Come enjoy a fun-filled evening of music, laughter, a fantastic array of delectable desserts made by our congregation's creative bakers, our mystery wine pull, a door prize and a silent auction! Sponsors and donations of baked goods, wine, gift cards and new items are greatly appreciated! Tickets will go on sale in mid-January. Stay tuned for more details after Christmas.



COOK WITH KIDS

Coconut Ice Squares

Ingredients

2 1/3 cups icing sugar, sifted

1/4 tsp cream of tartar

395g can sweetened
condensed milk

3 1/2 cups desiccated coconut

2 tsp vanilla extract

red food colouring

Step 1

Grease a 8 inch square cake pan. Line base and sides with baking paper, extending paper 2cm above edges of pan.

Step 2

Sift icing sugar and cream of tartar together into a large bowl. Add sweetened condensed milk, coconut, and vanilla. Mix until well combined. Divide mixture in half. Tint one portion of mixture pink with a couple drops of food colouring. Leave remaining portion plain.

Step 3

Press plain mixture over base of prepared pan, levelling top with the back of a spoon. Press pink mixture over plain mixture, levelling top with spoon. Cover. Chill for 3 hours or until set.

Step 4

Cut coconut ice into 2.5cm squares. Serve.



Colouring Page



Mark your calendars!

DATE	TIME	LITURGICAL DAY	WORSHIP LEADERSHIP	MUSIC LEADERSHIP/ STYLE OF SERVICE	SPECIAL INFO	FELLOWSHIP
Dec. 4	11:00 AM	Advent 2	James	Senior Choir	Communion	Coffee/tea
	7:00 PM	As above	Susan	Story and Song	EventTide	
Dec. 11	11:00 AM	Advent 3	James	Contemp. Ensemble	White Gift Sunday	Mini lunch
	7:00 PM	As above	James	The Sunday Table	EventTide	
Dec. 18	11:00 AM	Advent 4	James	Senior Choir	Lessons and Carols	Coffee/tea
	7:00 PM	As above	Young Adults	An Early Christmas	EventTide	
Dec. 21	7:00 PM	Winter Solstice	Susan	Wild Light	At Susan's home	
Dec. 24	4:30 PM	Christmas Eve	James	Family Service	Pop up Pageant	
	7:30 PM	Christmas Eve	James	Senior Choir	Communion	
Dec. 25	A video of a service is online for those who wish to worship Christmas morning. Enjoy.					

Jan. 1	11:00 AM	New Year's	James	Soloist		Coffee/tea
	7:00 PM	As above	Susan	Story and Song	EventTide	
Jan. 8	11:00 AM	Epiphany	James	Senior Choir	Communion	Coffee/tea
	7:00 PM	As above	James	The Sunday Table	EventTide	
Jan. 15	11:00 AM	Epiphany +2	James		Possible Baptism	Coffee/tea
	7:00 PM	As above	Susan	Story and Song	EventTide	
Jan. 22	11:00 AM	Epiphany +3	James			Mini lunch
	7:00 PM	As above	Young Adults	Tapestry	EventTide	
Jan. 29	11:00 AM	Epiphany +4	James			Coffee/tea
	7:00 PM	As above	James + Amy	Taizé Style service	EventTide	

Feb. 5	11:00 AM	Epiphany +5	James		Communion	Coffee/tea
	7:00 PM	As above	Susan	Story and Song	EventTide	
Feb. 12	11:00 AM	Epiphany +6	James			Coffee/tea
	7:00 PM	As above	James	The Sunday Table	EventTide	
Feb. 19	11:00 AM	Transfiguration	James		All Ages Service	Mini lunch
	7:00 PM	As above	Susan	Story and Song	EventTide	
Feb. 26	11:00 AM	Lent 1	James			Coffee/tea
	7:00 PM	As above	Young adults	Tapestry	EventTide	

*A contemporary online service is weekly at 4:30 pm on Saturdays. Check online for more information.