

Newsletter of St. James United Church

# THE VISITOR

**"When they  
saw the star  
they were  
overjoyed."**

Matthew 2:10



*Minister Message*  
**REFLECT AND  
CELEBRATE**

*Music Notes*  
**UPCOMING  
EVENTS**

*Avoiding Burnout*  
**TAKE A PAUSE**

*Gift Ideas*

*Blue Christmas*  
**SERVICE AND SUPPORT**

ADVENT/CHRISTMAS 2024



Welcome.

The season of Advent and Christmas is upon us. With all the hustle and bustle of the season, it is easy to forget to take the time to reflect. Try to slow down and appreciate the glory of the holiday.

We have a few events coming up to help you with that task. Whether it's the Advent discussion group, the Blue Christmas service, or just to take some time for yourself, let the church help you on your journey.

Thanks to all who have helped this holiday. We wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a happy, prosperous new year.

Sincerely,  
Glen Warren, Editor



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Minister:  
Rev. James Ravenscroft



@StJamesUnited



st.JamesUC



StJamesUCNL

**Worship with us!**  
**Sunday, 11:00 AM**  
**Sunday, 7:00 PM**





## Ministry Message

James Ravenscroft

Each June, as the weather warms, many members of St. James head out around the bay for weekend getaways or leave the island for summer excursions. But then September comes and temperatures cool, and we regroup as a community. Over the years, I have come to appreciate this regular rhythm of Canadian church life. For one, the slower pace gives me needed time to recharge after the busy-ness of the ministry year (September through June). It's also an annual reminder to me of the gift we share as a congregation. Over the summer, I notice who is away and wonder how they are doing, hoping they too are getting a needed break. And then they return with tales of what they did, where they went and who they saw.

That moment also gives me a boost. Seeing everyone together, renewing connections and making new ones (our location near the university means a regular uptick of newcomers each fall), reminds me why I entered ministry all those years ago. For me, it has always been about relationships, being there for each other, sharing a laugh and as likely sharing a cry, providing each other an opportunity to grow in faith, coming together in worship as diverse voices blend into one, serving in the community, all of it done in Jesus' name, a reflection of the world he invited us to nurture, an embodiment of the beloved community he called the kingdom of God. Helping nurture that is what brings my heart joy. And each fall we do that with renewed energy after much-needed time away for many, me included.

I suspect that I am not alone in the experience I just shared. And so I pray that we hold onto that feeling as fall shifts into winter and the busy-ness of the ministry year revs up. It is easy to lose sight of why we do what we do when commitments start to build and perhaps we've left some needed preparation for an event to the last minute (guilty as charged). So when we start to feel tired, even a bit overwhelmed, may we recall the joy we felt as September returned and brought with it faces both familiar and new, and brought with it: the gift of renewed community. I certainly will. After all, community is a big part of who we are, of why we keep returning each fall, ready to nurture the love, the faith, the relationships we share, in Jesus' name.

"Peace with  
God, peace  
with others,  
and peace in  
your own  
heart."

**Rick Warren**







We also have opportunities to gather for prayer in addition to Sunday morning worship. One opportunity is a bi-weekly Sunday evening focused on the LGBTQ+ community. Called Inside OUT this sharing circle meets worship is a space to explore the intersection between identity and spirituality when LGBTQ+ people are often pressured to choose between them. Inside OUT is held on the 1st and 3rd Sundays in the Quadrangle outreach room. Another opportunity is our monthly Taizé Prayer service. Held in the sanctuary the first Wednesday of the month at 6:30 pm, this 45 minute service is a reflective time of singing, listening to readings and spending time in contemplation. This could be a needed rest and quiet in the midst of the hustle and bustle that this season often turns into.

There is also a prayer service for anyone who finds their hearts touched with sadness at this time of year, the Blue Christmas Service especially meaningful for those of us who have experienced the death of a loved one recently, or perhaps the loss of health, employment, a relationship. It is at 7:00 pm on Tuesday, December 17. Or if you prefer an outdoor event, you can take part in our annual Winter Solstice Service in the evening of Saturday, December 21, hosted by Wild Light Spiritual Oasis (Forest Church) group.

Each of these services is a chance to come together with others in prayer as we seek the peace and grace that Christ brings. We can also bring that gift to others. One way to do this is to participate in our annual "Great Christmas Visit". This is a chance to visit one of our more senior members and bring them some Christmas cheer. A sign-up sheet is in the bulletin each week, or just let the office know you want to participate. In addition, each year we can share love with those of us in need of support by making donations to charities like Stella's Circle and Bridges to Hope. Consult the list of needed items for White Gift Sunday (December 8), remembering to bring them unwrapped. Make a donation of non-perishable food items, or better still, consider making a financial donation. The money is able to stretch further as they can buy in bulk as well as buy items that we may overlook.

This is the most wonderful time of the year, even with all that is happening in the world. It is a special time to celebrate, and to reflect as well, as we open our hearts to the peace and grace that Jesus' birth makes possible. So, in the midst of the festivities, be sure to take a breath, to pause for worship, and to explore the spiritual gifts of this Advent and Christmas.

I have come  
into the world  
as a light, so  
that no one  
who believes  
in me should  
stay in  
darkness.

**John 12:46**





# Music Notes



"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

As we step into Advent and a new church year, Bob and I would like to extend our best wishes to all of you. Advent is a season of anticipation and, on a personal level, this year feels particularly special for me. My almost three-year-old, Luke, is now at an age where he's captivated by the magic of Christmas. His joy must be contagious, as I feel even more inspired to prepare and lead the most meaningful and thoughtful musical offerings possible for our upcoming season.

The Senior Choir has been hard at work, crafting a beautiful musical program for the Advent and Christmas seasons. Among the highlights are a selection from Handel's Messiah, a cleverly arranged medley of The First Noel with Pachelbel's Canon, and a John Rutter anthem that I suspect will soon become a congregational favorite. As always, I express a sincere thank-you to the Senior Choir for the effort and commitment it takes to pull off such an ambitious and varied programme.

In addition, we are thrilled to welcome the St. James Brass Trio – John Austin, Trevor Bartlett and Amy Dalziel – for our December 8th worship. The group will perform arrangements of Advent hymns from Voices United.

For Christmas Eve, we'll hold two services: a family-oriented service at 4:30 PM featuring a contemporary ensemble of young adults, and our 7:00 PM service, where the Senior Choir will lead us in traditional Christmas music.

As we transition into the Epiphany season, the St. James Guitar Group will perform again on January 12th, lifting our spirits with their enthusiastic and joyful worship through music.

Finally, I want to express my gratitude to everyone who supports our music program, whether you sing, play, or simply listen with an open heart. It is a privilege and a joy to serve this congregation, and I'm continually inspired by your encouragement and participation.

Let's journey through this Advent season together, filled with hope, music, and the spirit of community.

Amy Dalziel  
Director of Music



# AVOIDING HOLIDAY BURNOUT

The festive season often involves more social activities, shopping and travel, which can disrupt regular routines and lead to burnout. Having a jam-packed diary of work drinks, Christmas dos and dinner parties might seem like a fun idea, but could quickly lead to fatigue if you don't take some time for yourself.

But what is social burnout? And how can we prevent ourselves from becoming physically and mentally drained amongst all the festivities in the run-up to Christmas?

## Try meditation

If you are getting overwhelmed about your busy schedule, then try meditation to slow down.

Meditation can help you feel calm, relaxed, and discover clarity and peace, holistic health and wellbeing practitioner. There are various techniques, such as focusing on your breath, listening to soothing music, or visualising serene scenes.

## Set time limits

Change how and when you socialise by reducing the length and time of day that you meet. Don't feel pressured to stay for a night cap or dessert.

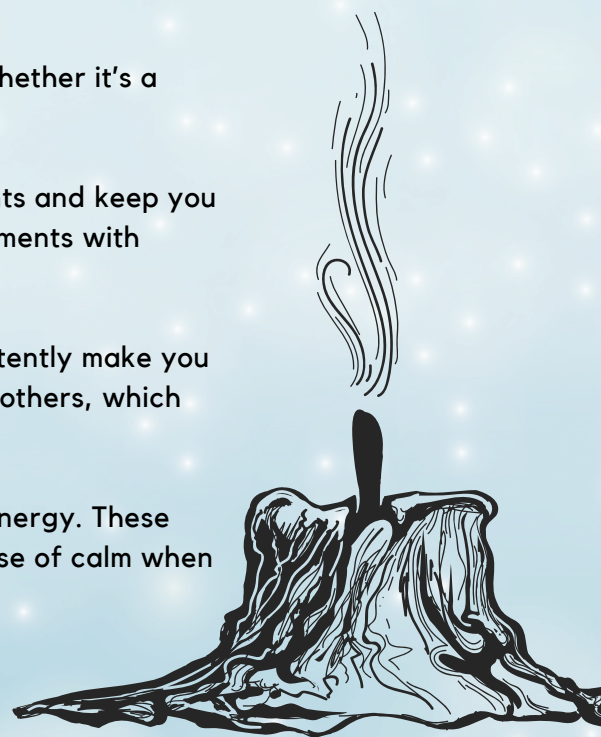
## Plan downtime and stick to it

Block out some time in your calendar specifically for relaxation, whether it's a quiet evening at home or a day to yourself.

These breaks can help recharge your energy between social events and keep you from feeling overwhelmed. Treat these as non-negotiable appointments with yourself.

Say goodbye to 'energy drainers', or those individuals who consistently make you feel stressed. Energy drainers often project their own issues onto others, which can weigh you down.

Instead, surround yourself with individuals who radiate positive energy. These uplifting people will boost your mood and energy, providing a sense of calm when you need it most.





# DISRUPTION OF ADVENT

Advent comes at the same time each year, more or less, but it always seems to come too fast. We get bombarded with Christmas imagery months in advance of the holiday. There's even holiday items in the stores in August. September starts school for so many and then the fall season flies by. Moreover, I've decided to watch television, scroll social media, play computer games, or listened to the news instead of reflecting. It's surprising how fast the season arrived, and I don't feel prepared for it.

Yet, in some ways, being distracted by life is exactly where Advent is supposed to begin. Each Sunday we find different characters in the Gospel story at different points in their lives. Mary opens her heart and mind to God completely as a visit from an angel dictates the course of her life. Joseph, at first, seeks to divorce Mary quietly because of her pregnancy outside of marriage, but then commits to God's will. Elizabeth, pregnant in her old age, meets her relative Mary, joyful about the miracle that God has wrought for her and her husband. Three Wise Men look up to the sky and see an astronomical sign that compels them to follow it through the desert.

Mary, Joseph, Elizabeth, and the Three Wise Men weren't planning for God to interrupt their lives as much as God did. Mary and Joseph were probably just hoping to start their lives together in Nazareth. Elizabeth and her husband were likely content with the lives that they had led without a child for years. The Three Wise Men were probably worrying about the lands that they were traveling from and all the issues that were present there. God did not wait until they were ready. God emerged from within their busy lives to draw them back towards love and humility in the face of life's everyday challenges.

Advent is the time for preparation and waiting. It's a time where God hopes to emerge in our lives, especially in those times when we are distracted. These stories are an invitation to consider the mystery of God's love and its incarnation within the ordinary lives that we lead. The response to this invitation does not need to be perfect or exact. However, the challenge is to open our hearts and minds towards this invitation, so that God's love might be born within our hearts.

# BLUE CHRISTMAS

More than one in 10 Canadians often or always feel lonely. Half of those who experience loneliness have poorer mental health overall. Your connection to others and your community are key ways to protect mental health, so loneliness is something to pay attention to. The holidays can be especially hard if you feel lonely.

There are many reasons you might be alone during the holidays. Sometimes it's your choice, and sometimes it isn't, for example, if you've lost someone, moved away or grown apart. If you are already feeling isolated socially or have a social or other anxiety disorder, being alone during the holidays can make things worse. If so,

- Do something special for yourself: cook yourself your favourite foods, go to a movie, or do a holiday project.
- Volunteer. By helping others, you also boost your own mental health and have a chance to connect with other people. Help out at a foodbank, serve holiday dinner at a community meal or offer to get groceries or spend some time with someone who's alone and doesn't want to be.
- Reach out to others who are also looking for connection: there are whole groups of people—in person and online—who are also looking for community.
- Go "old school" and write letters and holiday cards with invitations to connect by phone.

If, despite your best efforts, you feel overwhelmed with feelings of anxiety or sadness, or if your negative feelings are persistent or get in the way of your daily life, you should reach out for mental health support:

If you are thinking of suicide, please call Talk Suicide at 1-833-456-4566 toll free in Canada (1-866-277-3553 in Quebec) or dial 911.

For youth, call Kids Help Phone 1-800-668-6868 or [www.kidshelpphone.ca](http://www.kidshelpphone.ca)

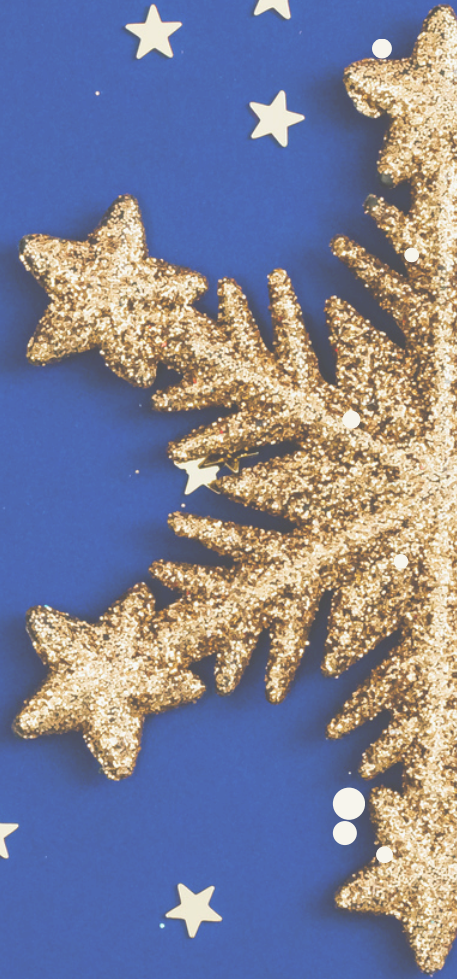


# CHRISTMAS SERVICES

*Family Christmas*  
*December 24*  
*4:30 PM*

*Candlelight Christmas*  
*December 24*  
*7:00 PM*

*Lay-led Service*  
*December 29*  
*11:00 AM*







## GIVING AND FORGIVING

What makes life worth the living  
Is our giving and forgiving;  
Giving tiny bits of kindness  
That will leave a joy behind us ,  
And forgiving bitter trifles  
That the right word often stifles,  
For the little things are bigger  
Than we often stop to figure .  
What makes life worth the living  
Is our giving and forgiving.

Thomas Grant Springer



# Epiphany Party

The Christmas season is a joyful time for family gatherings, and this year, we will celebrate the end of the season with an "Epiphany Party" on January 5, following worship. This event will highlight themes of Epiphany, such as the revelation of Jesus and unity among nations. Activities include making lanterns and stained-glass windows, sharing a king cake, enjoying international foods (volunteers needed), singing Epiphany carols, and receiving instructions to bless your home. In Newfoundland and Labrador, Christmas festivities continue beyond December 25, making this a perfect opportunity for the St. James family to come together and celebrate.



# Gift ideas

## 2025 CALENDAR

Grab this calendar from the church office and delight in photos our members captured throughout the year.

Available for just \$20!

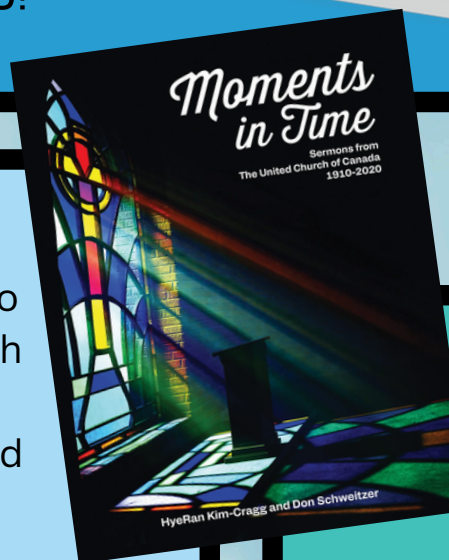


## Moments in Time

The collection includes two or three sermons from each decade of the UCC from 1910 to 2020, accompanied by analyses of the contemporary Canadian society, the church, homiletical techniques, and the impact of each preacher and sermon.

\$34.99

United Church Bookstore  
[www.ucrdstore.ca](http://www.ucrdstore.ca)



## Broadview Magazine

\$36.95 a year with  
TWO bonus issues

[broadview.org](http://broadview.org)



# *Baking Spirits Bright*

## *Bake Sale*

Lunch  
Menu  
Free Will  
Offering

**St. James United Church**  
**Sunday, December 15**  
**Noon - 2 PM**



# CRAFT WITH KIDS

## DREIDEL BANNER

You will need the following

- Scissors
- Ruler
- Blue and Silver trims
- 9x12 inch blue felt
- Cereal box cardboard
- Two silver pipecleaners
- Glue
- Two old neckties
- Large gold or silver buttons



1. Cut a 1.5 inch strip of cardboard nine inches long to form a support for the banner. Cut a piece of trim about 2 feet long and tie the ends together. Fold one 9 inch side of the felt over the trim hanger and cardboard and glue them in place.
2. Measuring from the tie point of each necktie, cut a piece of the wide end about 4.5 inches long
3. Cut the pipecleaner in half and fold to form a handle for the dreidel. Glue to the tie piece for the handle. Glue the tie to the felt.
4. Shape one of the Hebrew letters found on a dreidel and glue to the necktie piece.
5. Decorate the dreidels by gluing on pieces of trim.
6. Add the buttons to the banner corners to look like gelt coins.

Hanukkah starts on December 25 this year and continues for eight nights.

# Mark your calendars!

DATE	TIME	SUNDAY/STYLE	LEADERS	MUSIC	SPECIAL INFO	FELLOWSHIP
Dec 1	11:00 am	1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent	James	Senior Choir	Communion, Wld AIDS Day	Coffee/tea
Dec 1	7:30 pm	Inside OUT				
Dec 4	6:30 pm	Taizé Prayer		Soloist		
Dec 8	11:00 am	2 <sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent	James	Brass Trio	White Gift Sunday	Coffee/tea
Dec 14	5:30 pm	Tapestry				
Dec 15	11:00 am	3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent	James	Senior Choir	Baking Spirits Bright	Luncheon
Dec 15	7:30 pm	Inside OUT				
Dec 17	7:00 pm	Blue Christmas	James	TBA		
Dec 21	7:00 pm	Wild Light Sp. Oasis			Winter Solstice/Yule	
Dec 22	11:00 am	4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent	James	Senior Choir		
Dec 24	4:30 pm	Family Christmas	James	Young Adults		
Dec 24	7:00 pm	Candlelight Christmas	James	Senior Choir	Communion	
Dec 29	11:00 am	1 <sup>st</sup> Sun. of Christmas	TBA	Ensemble	Hanukkah (until Jan. 2)	
Jan 5	11:00 am	Epiphany(ish) Sunday	James	Senior Choir	Communion	Ep. Party
Jan 5	7:30 pm	Inside OUT				
Jan 8	6:30 pm	Taizé Prayer		Soloist		
Jan 11	5:30 pm	Tapestry				
Jan 12	11:00 am	Baptism of Jesus	James	TBA		Coffee/tea
Jan 19	11:00 am	2 <sup>nd</sup> Sun after Epiphany	James	Senior Choir	Burns Night on Jan. 25	Luncheon
Jan 19	7:30 pm	Inside OUT				
Jan 26	11:00 am	3 <sup>rd</sup> Sun. after Epiphany	James	TBA	Lunar New Year, Jan. 29	Coffee/tea
Jan 26	3:00 pm	Wild Light Sp. Oasis				
Feb 2	11:00 am	4 <sup>th</sup> Sun. after Epiphany	James	Senior Choir	Communion, Candlemas	Coffee/tea
Feb 2	7:30 pm	Inside OUT				
Feb 5	6:30 pm	Taizé Prayer		Soloist		
Feb 8	5:30 pm	Tapestry				
Feb 9	11:00 am	5 <sup>th</sup> Sun. after Epiphany	James	TBA	Black History Month	Coffee/tea
Feb 16	11:00 am	6 <sup>th</sup> Sun. after Epiphany	James	Senior Choir		Luncheon
Feb 16	7:30 pm	Inside OUT				
Feb 23	11:00 am	7 <sup>th</sup> Sun. after Epiphany	James	TBA	Pink Shirt Day, Feb. 26	Coffee/tea
Feb 23	3:00 pm	Wild Light Sp. Oasis				
Mar 2	11:00 am	Transfiguration Sun.	James	Senior Choir	Communion/Burn Palms	Coffee/tea
Mar 2	7:30 pm	Inside OUT				
Mar 4	5:00 pm	Shrove Tuesday			Pancake Supper	
Mar 5	6:30 pm	Ash Wednesday, Taizé			Distribution of Ashes	
Mar 8	5:30 pm	Tapestry				
Mar 9	11:00 am	1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday in Lent	James		Distribution of Ashes	Coffee/tea

