

John Black Memorial United Church



Christmas Newsletter 2011



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DATES TO REMEMBER

Dec. 6: Blue Christmas Service

at John Black acknowledges the darkness we may feel, but also offers a gentle word of hope and healing. 7 p.m.

Finding Room in the Inn...

Christmas Eve services in northeast Winnipeg:

5 p.m. at John Black Memorial
Family service

5 p.m. at Transcona Memorial
209 Yale St.

Intergenerational service

6 p.m. at Grey Street United
Grey at Sandhurst

Family service

7 p.m. at Transcona Memorial
Intergenerational service

7 p.m. at North Kildonan
174 Pentland

7 p.m. Immanuel
755 Golspie

7 p.m. at Gordon-King
127 Cobourg

8 p.m. at Grey Street
Christmas Eve Cantata

9 p.m. at Immanuel

10 p.m. at John Black
Holy Communion Service

Christmas Day services...

10 a.m. at Grey Street

10 a.m. at Transcona Memorial

10:30 a.m. at Gordon-King



MESSAGE FROM DAWN BALLANTINE-DICKSON...

I kept thinking, dismally, "This can't be all." After adding all the bulbs and trinkets to the Christmas tree, it still looked sparse.

The first year of their lives, our children received four or five baubles for "Baby's First Christmas" and after that they received one a year, and when they got old enough, we made a Boxing Day tradition of taking them to the mall to pick out their own. After 20 years or so, the two children had quite a collection, which completely disappeared when our last child took her ornaments to fill her tree.

After staring forlornly at this tree for a few moments, I plugged in the lights—un-obscured by knickknacks. Barren but beautiful, it shone in the corner of the living room. I am treasuring the light and resisting the temptation to run and buy ornaments to fill up the spaces, and cherishing the fact that the kids want the race cars, ice skaters, an-

gels and Santa mice as part of their new Christmas tradition. The tree is acting as a symbol not to rush around and "fill up" Christmas with too much baking and decorating, resulting in exhaustion Christmas Eve.

This year the light will shine a little brighter in our

home, and hopefully we will make space in our life for enjoying memories and sharing more time with friends and family.

In a real way Christmas has already come to us, and we have un-wrapped an unexpected gift of peace.



Advent is here...

Thanks to Nathan McKay, a new advent wreath has been forged to hold tapers, and Jim Kenning has made a frame of a manger to shelter our advent readers as they invite us all to experience the birth of Christ once again.

This year, as in years past, the pastoral care team will host the Blue Christmas service. This service, on Dec. 6 at 7 p.m., invites us to quietly gather together to hear the Christmas story which reflects on new life in the midst of life that has its share of disappointment, sorrow and homesickness. Hope, peace, joy and love have deep meaning for those who long for the courage and strength they bring.

We will be celebrating two Christmas Eve services. The 5 p.m. service is a simple re-enactment of the nativity story. Children are invited to participate by becoming angels, shepherds, wise men, or even a sheep. The 10 p.m. service is quieter and more formal, concluding in Holy Communion and sharing of candlelight.

Although Christmas Day does fall on a Sunday, there will be no service, and people are invited to attend other churches that morning.

ST. ANDREW'S COLLEGE INVITES DAWN TO CHAIR BOARD OF REGENTS

There is an expectation that each ordered, paid, accountable minister take on some responsibilities outside their congregation to work for the good of the broader church.

I have accepted the invitation to chair the Board of Regents for St. Andrew's College in Saskatoon. St. Andrew's College is a United Church of Canada's theological school and my alma mater. To quote the material on its website:

"The college offers courses leading to the Master of Divinity (M.Div.), Master of Theological Studies (M.T.S.), Master of Sacred Theology (S.T.M.), Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.), and a one-year Diploma in Theology."

The board I am chairing is interested in quality education, student recruitment, funding, and working ecumenically with the other colleges on campus.

I will be spending one year as chair elect, and then two years as chair, with the possibility of a renewal of one two-year term. Each year, I will attend three, three-day meetings (inclusive of flight time) in February, October and May, and never on a weekend, and take three one-hour conference calls prior to the meetings so I can set the agenda. All expenses for flights and accommoda-

tion, and conference calls are paid by the college, and any office work when necessary will be done by the college.

I have been on various committees in the past and have spent in total at least this much time in preparation, travel and attending an assortment of meetings.

DAWN REFLECTS ON FIRST FOUR MONTHS

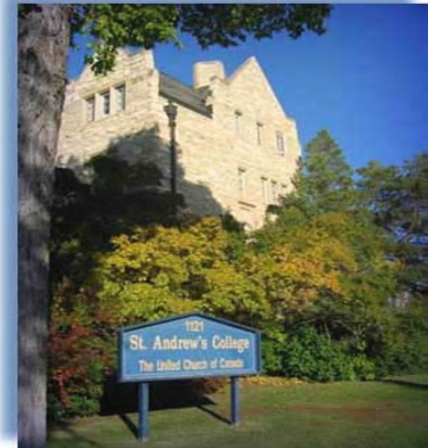
"What did you do today?" is one of the first questions I am met with as I come in the door at home. The answers have been surprising.

With the "pie ladies" I learned to seal the top of a pie with water and to use the fancy can opener. I also learned that if the pie is frozen and chunky, it's an apple. I have never had so much fun peeling turnips as I did in the kitchen before the fall supper, or being "brave" and going up to the attic to check out the Christmas decorations.

This job has its perks. Much of it is coffee—meetings here and snacks seem to go together. Good for fellowship and a real inducement to continue walking for exercise.

It has not been all fun and games; I have also been invited into your lives in times of joy and sorrow and am honoured and humbled by that.

This task allows me to focus my effort in concentrated periods of time on one project. I am looking forward to being part of the St. Andrew's community again and to continuing my efforts to enable the development of ministry in the United Church.



"How's it going?" is the question I am asked at church. It is going well. To quote Jim Croce: "But there never seems to be enough time, to do the things you want to do, once you find them. I have looked around enough to know that you're the one I want to go through time with." I am happy being here and feel I make a difference.

These first four months (July being holidays) has been an introduction to how you do things. In the next six months I am hoping to do more visiting and focus in on leadership, to continue to support and enable the hard working folks as they look at their joys and priorities. I realize that I have come at a turning point in your church life. I often hear "unless things change... I don't know what we'll do in five to 10 years." I realize that before hiring me as your minister you talked about this, and will need to con-

tinue to talk about it until as a congregation you can set out achievable and faithful goals on how to be God's people in this community. It is important that everyone have a voice, so we hear the desires of all the people. The blessing is that you have the willingness, the time and the ability at this point to discuss and enact change. We are not in this alone; God is with us, and so are four other United Churches in our area with which we are in conversation. We are not the same but we share many of the same joys and challenges.

These may be hard times, but the birth of something new always is. Newness can happen by renewal from within, it can also happen by reaching out and working with others. If we trust the product is joy and blessing, then it is certainly worth the prayer and diligence of God's faithful people.

“To seek justice, and love kindness and walk humbly”...

Dianne Baker's three months of trying to live Micah's Way

By Dianne Baker

This summer I took time away from Canada to live in the Occupied Palestinian Territories of the West Bank.

I baked and broke bread with families in the South Hebron Hills in Palestine, walked with shepherds and farmers, drank tea with elderly men in their olive groves, witnessed people commute to their workplaces, and walked children to and from school.

These sound like normal, humble, everyday things... and they are. But the reasons that international presence was needed is that these everyday activities expose people to harassment, violence, humiliation and intimidation by their neighbours.

The people I supported were Palestinians and the neighbours who caused the fear and frustration were Israelis. The people I walked with were Muslim; the people who victimized them were Jewish. There is no other way to tell this story. I am describing what I saw and experienced, not making broad generalizations about all Jewish people, or all Palestinians.

I am critical of policies and practices of the State of Israel that justify oppression and control of Palestinians and excuse violent actions of Israelis. I am also critical of the Palestinian groups that advocate violence and acts of terrorism.

In villages, I played with children often. These kids could identify military or police vehicles that passed on highways at a distance. They knew that if they walked to a certain point



on the hillside and saw a person in a white shirt and black pants walking towards them, they needed to run home to their tent. It meant a Jewish settler was coming, and that likely meant trouble. These little ones were wired to sense danger. Their mothers would talk about their nightmares, and bed wetting, how they became aggressive or withdrawn in the days after an incident of violence. In Susiya, one of the villages we visited often, a tent was set ablaze by the nearby settlers in the middle of the night: a family was asleep inside when this happened. For days after, the children walked wide-eyed and trembling.

In southern Israel, close to Gaza, rockets sometimes are fired over the separation wall and crash into land near Jewish villages. Playgrounds have fortified structures that act as bomb shelters and all the children know which ones to run to when the siren sounds. These children internalize the belief that the people on the other side of the tall concrete wall want to kill them.

How will either people ever raise a generation who can live in peace with one another?

I cannot believe that the God who invites us all to “love kindness and to walk humbly” would condone these acts.

To effect change will take deep courage and the commitment of adults who speak differently about hope, and sharing, and what God wants for all God's people. Right now, the Israeli Government offers no leadership in this area. It touts security as the primary goal, but uses means of achieving this

that fosters rage in the ones they name as enemy.

The hope is coming from groups in civil society in Palestinian communities and in Israel, who are committed to non-violent protests and to welcoming collaboration between the peoples.

Now, back in Canada for nearly two months, I know that the walk must continue through advocacy work, writing letters and emails to governments, and talking about my experiences. It is impossible to capture the whole of this journey in this article. I look forward to a time of sharing more fully with the congregation of John Black.

Thank you all for the prayers and support I felt while I was away.



COOKIES AND MORE COOKIES!



Calling all bakers! We already know we have some of the best bakers in the city, right here at John Black. I am looking for your best cookie recipes—maybe it's your grandmother's famous sugar cookies, Great-Aunt Minnie's shortbread, or your neighbour's sister-in-law's mother's drop cookies.

We will be gathering recipes over the next while and printing a cookies-only recipe collection as a new fundraiser for Spring 2012. We'll even host a "Tea and Cookies" event to kick off the sale. I already have cookie recipes from the Famous Cookie Lady of John Black, Ann, who supplied a jar of cookies a month for a year to several JB families as part of a time and talent auction. And believe me they were worth every penny!

So think of this project as you do your Christmas baking or make cookies for your adorable grandchildren. Don't forget recipes for people with allergies or diet restrictions—gluten free, diabetic, etc.

Recipes can be handwritten and dropped off at the church, photocopied, or emailed to: pjohnston@hotmail.com. Any questions, please call me, Pat Johnston at 661-9257.

Sunday a.m. tech support needed

One of the more difficult positions for the house groups to fill for a month is operation of the PowerPoint for services. The Worship Interest Group and the House Group Facilitator would like to compile a list of people who could be called on to fill vacancies or to help coach a new operator for a couple of Sundays. If you do not yet

know how to do the PowerPoint but would like to learn in a one-on-one lesson, we would love to hear from you also.

If you can help in either way would you please contact the office at 661-2579 or speak with someone in the Worship Interest Group.

Breakfast program provides warm fuzzies

Our breakfast program at Prince Edward School is under way for another school year. We are serving 20-25 children every Friday and it is enjoyed by all—children and volunteers. The breakfasts consist of an array of foods: cold cereals, hot oatmeal, cheese, yogurt, toast with jam or Cheez Whiz, and fruits. A big thank you to you all for supporting this much needed community outreach service.

If you ever have a need to feel warm and fuzzy for an hour or so, coming to Prince Edward on a Friday morning and seeing all those happy faces will do it for you. We're always looking for new volunteers, particularly now with some of us planning winter vacations. Thanks again and we'd love to see you there in January. Call the church office if you're interested.



ODDS AND ENDS...



Family Christmas Party: Mark your calendar for John Black's family Christmas party/spaghetti supper, to be held in Robertson Hall on Dec. 9 beginning at 6:45 p.m. We'll supply the spaghetti and sauce. Please bring a food dish to contribute to the meal. Email Nancy at n.ewachewski@gmail.com to RSVP your attendance and to let her know what you're bringing. See you there!

Fall supper at John Black: A great meal was enjoyed by 162 adult ticket-holders and eight child ticket-holders. The tasty turkey and other staples of a fall supper totalled an expense of \$547.46. The silent auction netted a total income of \$138, and food sales after the supper, such as meatballs and potatoes, netted \$60. There were also donations by the workers for their meals, which netted \$112. Other miscellaneous donations of \$29.46 helped in making the grand total **\$2,100**. Many thanks again to the volunteers who helped make the 2011 John Black Memorial United Church Fall Supper a great success.—*Laurel Curry*

JUST* CHRISTMAS: What a wonderful, amazing afternoon! Close to 300 people attended the 4th annual Just* Christmas on Nov. 20, hosted this year by Transcona Memorial United Church. The vendors were pleased with the funds raised for justice concerns here at home and around the globe. Many thanks to all who made this happen . . . especially the cookie bakers.—*Joan Swaffer*

Christmas craft sale at JB: The event was a huge success due to so many volunteers. We were successful financially but also emotionally. There was so much fun, laughter and love amongst all the volunteers that it was a joy to be a part of the day. The final amount raised was **\$3,084**—the most we have ever made at the craft sale. The baking table wins the prize for raising the most at \$1,105. Way to go!!! The children's Christmas shopping room was an added feature this year and the children and the young at heart had a fun time with Jane Roth. She really made the children feel special. Thanks again to all who set up tables, worked in the kitchen, helped in the tea room, contributed baking, and stayed for clean-up. Of course we wouldn't have had such a successful day if we hadn't had the attendance that we did. So many of you took the time to pop in and support the vendors and stay for lunch. That made my day! We mustn't forget Luella Stephens who worked tirelessly to make the silent auction a wonderful part of the day! The pie ladies once again outdid themselves and sold over \$800 worth of pies! Elaine Steski and the girls are a big hit amongst the shoppers! Dave Coulthard took the time to show Al Roth how to work the elevator and Al also fixed the toilet in the ladies washroom. Way to go guys! At the end of the event an angel appeared (Marg Richards) and volunteered to count the money. What would we do without each other?!! Many hands sure made the day easier for all involved. See you at MARKET DAY 2012!—*Donna Fabbri*