

John Black Memorial United Church

Christmas Newsletter 2017

CHRISTMAS AT JOHN BLACK

Dec. 6: Blue Christmas, 7 p.m. A time of quiet reflection, support and healing as we approach the sometimes "too joyful" Christmas season. (See page 2 for more details.)

Dec. 10: White Gift Sunday, 10:30 a.m. We welcome non-perishable foods items, warm hats, mitts or socks, gifts for children, teens and adults for presentation at our White Gift service. All are gratefully received and will be delivered to the Christmas Cheer Board.

Dec. 20: Christmas Wave, 7:30 a.m. Join the hardy group of angels, shepherds and magi who greet commuters with a friendly wave, then come inside for a hot drink before packing treat bags to be given to children on Christmas Eve.

Dec. 24: Christmas Eve Morning Service, 10:30 a.m. On this, the 4th Sunday of Advent, communion and Christmas Eve references will be part of the service.

Christmas Eve Family Service, 5:30 p.m. Children are encouraged to participate in the Christmas story. Please note: there will not be a late Christmas Eve Service at John Black United Church.

Also during Advent, stewardship moments will be part of the weekly services. You will be asked to consider prayerfully your contributions of time and financial resources to the work and mission of our church.



WAITING FOR THE ONE WHO WILL COME... MESSAGES FROM OUR MINISTERS

I would like to begin by giving my and my family's warmest wishes and blessings to each of you as we enter this season of Advent and prepare for Christmas.

The season of Advent brings with it many activities in both the church and in the community as we gear up to celebrate Christmas. It is a busy time for all of us with shopping, parties, extra services, craft sales, teas, Christmas concerts and decorating.

Starting as early as September we are bombarded in stores, on the internet and on television with images of Christmas. I have lost count of all the messages I have seen on social media giving a countdown to Christmas.

If you are like me, it is easy to get caught up in the Christmas rush with kids and family, and to put aside the true meaning of Christmas.

It is easy to spend all the time on preparations and extra activities, and to not spend quiet time reflecting on what Christmas is all about. In the midst of our busy-ness I encourage each of you, and myself, to take a moment of time to sit back and to reflect upon the meaning of this



season. Jesus Christ is born into our midst, a gift of Love from God, greater than any other gift given to us.

"But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord.'" Luke 2: 10-11

May we truly see and experience the Good News and Great Joy for all of us as we prepare for the birth of the Christ Child. May this time for all of us be a time of rich blessing in which we may be renewed in our faith and knowledge that God's love is indeed with us.

Peace,
Cathy Maxwell

A Christmas message from Ken

"If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay." *Habakkuk 2: 3b*

The "it" in the above is divine justice. God's justice, peace and equality will come to all of God's creation. It will. It may seem a long wait, but it will come.

Trust in God's promise.

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A TIME OF ENDINGS AND A TIME FOR BEGINNINGS

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We are at that special time. It is a time of endings and a time for beginnings.

First, God's promise is fulfilled. We are sent an infant who will show us the way. The waiting is ended and new life begins.

Secondly, as 2017 ends, we prepare for 2018, which will fill us with surprises. Hopefully there will be more good surprises than unpleasant ones, but God knows; we don't.

Advent begins December 3 and we begin, again, to wait for the birth of the one who will teach us, again, the way to right relationship with our

Creator. We know Christ will be "born" December 25.

We've celebrated that day for centuries and we know that wait will end that day.

But we also spend Advent reminding ourselves that we are waiting for God's reign to be real, for Christ's teachings to be lived and not debated.

How long is that wait? Will we see it? It will come, as surely as that child Jesus was born centuries ago.

But we wait.

What are you waiting for in this season? In your life?

How do you wait? Is there anxiety or fear or calmness or assurance?

Who is waiting with you?

Advent is a time of longing and waiting in confidence and hope that God *will* come among us, and *will* be visibly present in this world.

And so, let the waiting begin, again.

As one of your ministers and a fellow Christian follower, and on behalf of all my family, I wish you a Blessed Christmas and a Holy New Year.

I give you a Celtic Blessing:

May the New Year bring the warmth of home and hearth to you...

the cheer and goodwill of friends to you...

the hope of a childlike heart to you...

the joy of a thousand angels to you...

the love of the Son and God's peace to you.

Peace,
Ken DeLisle

ODDS AND ENDS FROM JB

A Christmas Tea, Crafts, Bake Sale and Children's

Christmas Room happens at John Black United Church on Saturday, Dec. 2 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Join us for a bake and craft sale, and a delicious luncheon. Invite your friends, relatives, neighbours and little ones who can shop in the children's Christmas room. Treat someone special to a lovely day.

Help is always needed. Sign-up sheets are in the narthex. Donations of new items for the silent auction can be dropped off at the church between 9 a.m. and noon weekdays. For more information email Luella Stephens at luellas@shaw.ca

Sobeys/Safeway Gift Cards will be available until December 3, with delivery on December 10. This is a great fundraiser as the church benefits from your purchase and you get the total value of the card. The cards also make great Christmas gifts and would be an ideal donation for our silent auction at the Christmas tea. If you're unable to attend church but would like to order gift cards, please contact Ken Bradshaw at ken-bradshaw@hotmail.com, phone 204-669-1586.

Do you like to sing? Come and join the choir, even if it's just for the Christmas Season. It's the most wonderful time of the year to be in the choir! Practises are Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. (over by 9 p.m. at the latest) and warmup takes place in Fellowship Hall at 10 a.m. Sunday morning. Please come and join us!



An Invitation ... Blue Christmas Service Wednesday, December 6, 7 p.m.



The "Blue Christmas" tradition honours the feeling many people have that the Christmas season is not an easy one to get through. Although the joyful carols play throughout the malls and public places, loss, anxiety, life transitions and painful past experiences can make what is lifted up as a time of good cheer into a time of dread.

Blue Christmas acknowledges the sadness we all feel at times but offers, as well, a gentle word of hope and healing. It will be a time of quiet reflection and fellowship.

This is an open invitation; please feel free to invite others. Everyone is welcome. We hope you'll join us for refreshments after the service.

May God's peace be with you this Christmas and throughout the coming year.

The Pastoral Care Team

JOHN BLACK FALL SUPPER ANOTHER DELICIOUS SUCCESS



Everyone works hard behind the scenes at the fall supper, but this team is critical to our success! A huge thanks to (from left) Jake Letkeman, "Top Dog" Bea Letkeman, Peter Enns, Marilyn Thiessen, Charlotte Kaisaris and Philip Poole.



Our resident "Pie Lady" Elaine Steski (left) and her helper Phyllis Koricki ready the pies for the fall supper.

JIGG NEWS

The JIGG group (made up of John Black, Immanuel, Gordon-King, Grey Street United churches) that met in the spring to plan shared worship and fellowship during July and August has met to evaluate those services and to look ahead.

Gordon-King invites you to their Jolly Holly lunch after church on December 17; watch for a sign-up sheet so they know numbers.

Another meeting has been scheduled for early January to investigate shared Lenten activities and a mid-winter lunch at John Black United.

Over 175 folks enjoyed our annual fall supper on October 28. The result? A net profit to our church of \$3,168 (\$400 of that figure represents proceeds from the silent auction organized by Luella Stephens.)

To the kitchen crew under the leadership of Bea, Jake, Peter, Marilyn, Philip and Charlotte; and to the many, many others who worked in a variety of ways to make the event a success, and to those who donated pies and items for the silent auction, a HUGE thank you!

Thanks too, to the members of the congregation who came—and brought friends and neighbours—to enjoy the fellowship and a great meal.

Everyone's participation and support is what makes our fall supper a success. The fellowship and stewardship received and given is the reason we do what we do!



DEDICATED VOLUNTEER RECOGNIZED

With All Saints Day getting near, it was the perfect time for the Pastoral Care Committee to say thank you to Edith Treller, someone who works "with quiet grace" and who "shines from within," says Joan Zuk.

Edith continues to be a dedicated volunteer in many capacities at John Black, including acting as the funeral reception co-ordinator, a role she has held for over 21 years. On October 29, she and her "aide-de-camp" — husband Jim—were presented with gifts of appreciation from the Pastoral Care Team on behalf of the entire congregation. God bless you, Edith!

Pictured above from left to right are Susan Stastook (Pastoral Care), Jim and Edith Treller, Nell Dyck and Joan Zuk (Pastoral Care.)

A LETTER TO ALL FROM THE STEWARDSHIP GROUP

Dear Friend,

You are receiving this letter in the fall/ winter newsletter as a way to ensure that we reach everyone and to save the cost of postage with an every-person mail out. If you wish a printed copy it can be made available to you.

CHANGE is in the air as we move through Advent – the beginning of another church year. Change in ministerial staff has given us the opportunity to look at how we have “done worship” and at how we might do things differently. Change—wonderful, exciting change—happened over the summer as John Black shared worship space, style of worship, and fellowship with our United Church neighbours in East. Kildonan.

Just as we embrace change, we can also celebrate our place in community. The enthusiasm around hot lunches at West Broadway is contagious, as is the provision and serving of breakfast to children at Prince Edward School.

The Green Group and the Truth and Reconciliation Group provide opportunities for education about environmental and social justice issues.

Planning is ongoing with our ecumenical neighbours to have a service of reflection and prayer in the new year. And our building is a meeting place for a wide range of groups and activities for children and adults.

These programs function only with our presence and our financial support, support which is also needed for the provision of staff and the maintenance of our building.

Thank you for your ongoing support and prayers. If you would like to make changes to your financial pledge, make an initial pledge, or would like to make contributions by PAR (pre-authorized remittance) please call the church office at 204-661-2579.

If you would like information about programs, interest groups, or house groups contact Cathy Sokolowski, Donna Fabbri or Edith Treller.

With gratitude for your support,
The Stewardship Group

DECEMBER A SUPER MONTH FOR HOUSE GROUPS

This is the second year that the House Groups will operate Super Month for the month of December.

This means that rather than having one or two house groups “in charge” for the month of December, ALL house groups share that responsibility.

You will have noticed a sign-up board in the narthex for Super Month. Please take a look at your schedules and on the weeks you will be in church for the service, sign up for one of the

tasks shown on the list.

If you are unable to help out on Sunday mornings, perhaps you could fold bulletins, tidy the narthex, or change the sign outside our building during the week. All the tasks are important: when they are done well, the service runs smoothly.

This year Christmas Eve falls on a Sunday. There will be two services of worship that day, one at 10:30 a.m. and one at 5:30 p.m. Communion in December will be held on the first Sunday

of the month and at the December 24 morning service.

Once again as the year draws to a close, we thank those who serve as House Group leaders. These folks are Susan Stastook, Wanda McConnell, Phyllis Koricki, Marilyn and Earl Dudek, Luella and Jim Stephens, Marge and Gord Richards, Joan Zuk, Donna and Bob Fabbri, Jake Letkeman, Marilyn Thiessen, Lori McKay, Joan Swaffer, Mary and Ken Bradshaw, Brenda Wedlake, and Joanne Ward.



A covenanting service

between Cathy Maxwell, Ken DeLisle, and the congregation of John Black has been planned for Sunday, December 10, at 7 p.m. at John Black. Please join folks from Winnipeg Presbytery as we acknowledge our new relationship.

John Black's annual general meeting will be held on January 28 following the service. Hope to see you there!