Connections

Connected Creative Caring

December 2022

"The Lord is coming, always coming.
When you have ears to hear and eyes to see,
you will recognize "The Lord" at any moment of your life.
Life is Advent; life is recognizing the coming of the Lord."
Henri Nouwen

This is an aspirational quote if ever there was one. Imagine living so awakened to the Spirit of Christ that you were aware of the ceaseless presence of God, with you and for you, every moment of your life?

This is exactly the good news that Christmas promises. God is not somewhere over the rainbow or high above the clouds; but in Jesus, the Divine surprises the world embodied in an impoverished, Middle Eastern, Jewish, kid – wow!

As we press deeper into December, many of us will become increasingly busy with events, family commitments, grocery shopping, present hunting, meal preparation and gift wrapping. There's endless energy that goes into keeping the Christmas-machine running. Many feel December's pressure in different ways and on various levels. For some it's the pressure to decorate the house to convince visitors (or ourselves) the perfect family lives there. For others, it's finding the ideal gift for someone who means the world to you. For some of us, our love language is cooking, so we bless those we care about with over-flowing tables and stuffed tummies.

Of course, we've been through enough Christmases to know that things never go perfectly. There are always hiccups and bloopers. Turkeys get over-cooked, sweaters don't fit, and sometimes Santa forgets to bring batteries for the new toys (I've heard).

Deeper than the small mishaps, for many, Christmas is a time of increased anxiety, re-lived trauma, family conflict, loneliness or let down. Very rarely is Christmas perfect for any of us. Often, it's far more complicated than what we see play out in the movies. And…

That doesn't change the promise that God is still coming. God doesn't wait for perfection or our ideal version of what we think Christmas should look like. In Jesus we see the God who relentlessly saturates places of conflict, disappointment, complexity and darkness with hope, peace, joy and love. God is invading each moment. The question has always been; will you live in a way that embodies this Advent truth – Emmanuel, God with us. Always.

Trevor

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Humber Valley
UNITED CHURCH

Waiting and Preparing: From the Editor's Desk

A month or so ago Deb Turnbull asked me to host the Advent Hymn Sing on December 3. I hesitated because I knew I would be very busy (aren't we all at this time of year?) but, really, I wanted to do it. So for a while I mulled around in my mind what approach I would take to the service. Usually we introduce the hymns with a biography of the composer and lyricist and maybe a word or two about its significance. I didn't want to do that. I wanted to tell some Advent stories.

So I started reading a couple of books Trevor lent me, and sermons and reflections I found using Google. And then I realized that we have published a whole bunch of great stories and reflections in earlier December editions of *Connections*. Reading them and sharing them was a wonderful Advent adventure for me. There were touching stories and challenging reflections that helped me get myself into the spirit of Advent.

One writer talked about feeling a deep connection to Mary in the nativity stories when she herself was pregnant; she was waiting with an expectation of something beautiful ahead. "This experience helps me to think about expectation in Advent. I wait expectantly for the Christ Child to come again, but I do not know the form that the appearance will take. I wait with an anticipation that it will be something wonderful and maybe surprising. Will it be a gift in prayer? A moment holding a real baby? An encounter with family or friends where we know Christ is present among us?"

I quoted Rev. Lena Medeiros who wrote that Christmas is also the story of how an ordinary young girl, Mary, risked everything to say "yes" to God. She became extraordinary; she birthed the greatest change the world has known.

Kathy Kitchen had a story about her nativity scene that was a gift from an aunt. "Every year I carefully take the 2 adult figures and little baby out of a box and put white sparkly lights and greenery around them. They are a true reminder to my family of why we celebrate Christmas."

It was a dark and rainy Saturday morning, on December 3. Jill, George, and a group of singers from Valley Voices were there at 9:45 to go over the Advent hymns Jill had chosen. The service began promptly at 10:30. I told the stories I had found and the choir sounded wonderful. After the service everyone lingered and chatted happily. And as Ruth Johnson pointed out to me, the rain had stopped, and now the sun was shining.

I got this note from Cathy Wilkes who watched the hymn sing on her computer in Florida:
"I am about to walk up to the little Howey Community Church where I am a snowbird member…average attendance 23. For the next few weeks before I come home for Christmas I am the liturgist…basically, doing the readings, the announcements and so on. I can't tell you how comforting it was to see our beautiful Humber Valley chancel screen, familiar faces, lovely trees on my computer as I dressed and got prepared for the service today. So many Christmases spent in the sanctuary. So many memories."

In his teaching this morning Trevor talked about the importance of the journey, the Advent journey to Christmas. It is during this journey that we experience the hope, peace, love and joy and are open to the appearance of the Christ Child in our lives.

This edition of *Connections* reflects our very active and dynamic faith community. We've shared very successful events as the pictures show. There are also stories about Christmas and about the YWS garden.

I would like to thank all the people that make *Connections* possible. Colleen and I could not do it without our amazing contributors, our eagle-eyed proofreaders, Kelly who prints Connections, the people who deliver copies, and our sponsors who help defray the costs of production.

Merry Christmas to All.

We love to hear from you. Please send your comments and suggestions to Susanne or Colleen.

Susanne Hynes

From the Desk of the Chair of the Board

Trevor has been Called as our Minister

We warmly welcome Trevor as our Minister, following the approval of the call by the congregation on November 20, 2022. We will continue to move forward in our transformation while at the same time providing a multiplicity of expressions of worship arts (e.g., varied music, choral ensemble, bells, drama, dance, etc.). We also acknowledge that some people did not vote for the call and want them to know that they continue to be part of our church family as we move to provide diverse programming to ensure all are truly welcome at HVUC.

Thank You for Adorning our Church

Thank you to Carolyn and her team of volunteers who decorated the church for the Christmas season and who organized and donated Christmas baking and decorations for the highly successful Christmas Market. And thank you to Pippa who came up with our door angel and lights on the birch trees.

Merry Christmas Humber Valley

As we head into the season of Advent, it is a time to share and celebrate the gifts of the season: hope, peace, joy and love. This is a time of waiting, expectation and wonderment.

Let us share these gifts with our ever-growing church family made up of not only people who come to church regularly, or watch online regularly, but who are a part of our broader local community and are people and groups we support through our programming and outreach.

May your hearts also be filled with these gifts not only during Advent, but also for the whole year ahead.

Blessings,

Deb Turnbull

HVUC Becoming an Affirming Church

The REDI (Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion) committee was very excited about the results of the vote to become an Affirming Church which took place on Sunday November 20, 2022 . The final vote tally was:

107 Yes to becoming an Affirming Church
8 No to becoming an Affirming Church
93% YES VOTE

The congregation should not see this as the end of the process, but the beginning of a much longer journey to seek social justice, support Indigenous reconciliation, reach out to the LGBTQ2+ community and become a safe place for all to attend and join our church family.

The REDI committee will also work closely with the outreach committee as we begin our new journey. Part of becoming an affirming church is to have an affirming action plan. The affirming action plan will help and guide us to live into our commitment to be Affirming.

For the congregates who voted no, we accept your votes, and want you to know that you are fully welcomed at Humber Valley United Church because our church is open to all as we state each Sunday morning and in our vision statement.

The last step to become an affirming church is to have a celebration. Date and time for this celebration need to be determined and will be announced at a later date.

Lastly, I would like to thank the REDI committee members for all their hard work in getting Humber Valley United Church to this point in our affirming journey.

The members of the REDI committee are George Turnbull, Mary Moffat Johansson (Co-Chair), Constance Crosby, Pippa van der Vliet, Karen Ashforth, Allan Orr (Co-Chair), Catherine Clements, Trevor Brisbin, Barbara Clarke and Anne Pietropaolo.

Allan Orr

416-464-1012, allanjorr@gmail.com

55+ Meditative Walks

We started walking together about eighteen months ago. For a while we walked in West Deane Park along Mimico Creek. We tried a few other places but have settled into our home walk in James Gardens.

We thought we might have to stop for a bit in the winter but decided to bundle up and brave the snow, wind, and ice. We're so happy we did, and we will again.

Meditative Walks are led by Anne Pietropaolo. The walkers gather in a circle at 9:30 am each Tuesday for a few words to focus our walk. Then we walk for about half an hour, in silence. Well, maybe not always in silence since sometimes we just need to talk with someone.

We notice the trees, the water, the flowers, the shrubs and the birds. We watched three families of goslings grow up. We see lots of cardinals, nuthatches, chickadees, wrens, mourning doves, robins. We also see lots of other walkers enjoying early mornings along the Humber River.

At the end of the walk we meet in a gazebo to talk about what we experienced. For Advent this year we are doing a devotional on the wonders of birds.

We're friends from HVUC and the wider community.

LADIES' NIGHT OUT

Smiles galore!

Success! So much fun!

In the last three years there were few, or no, opportunities for a group of over 140 woman to be together laughing, chatting, sharing food over a glass of wine and totally enjoying themselves.

On October 26 the HVUC UCW provided such an evening where **Enjoyment** was met by all. A huge benefit to the evening was the amount of money raised for charities.

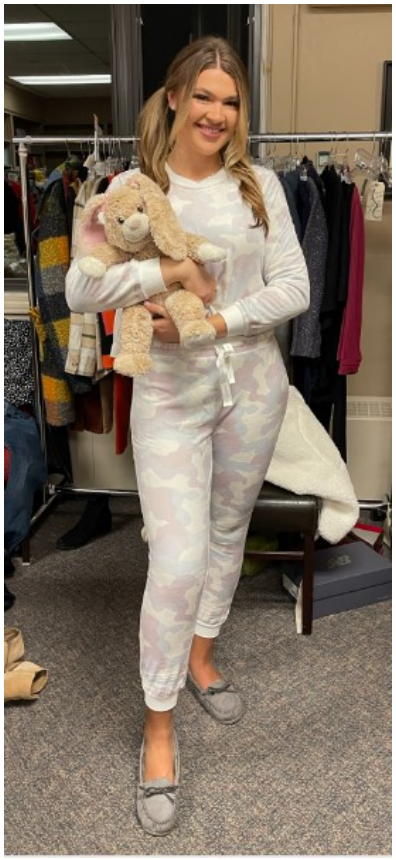
Special thanks to Zacks who supplied the Fashion Show allowing pent up buying gurus the opportunity to see what was in style!!

The sponsors provided information and added to the charity money raised by advertising in the Ladies Night Out booklet. Thank you

Turner and Porter
Ken Shaw Lexis
Dineen Construction
Casual Affairs
Beaulieu
A Changing Nest
Tapestry
ERT Online Training
ICLS, Chartwell Retirement
Thornbrook Homecare
Farquhar Advantage
Westmount Gallery.

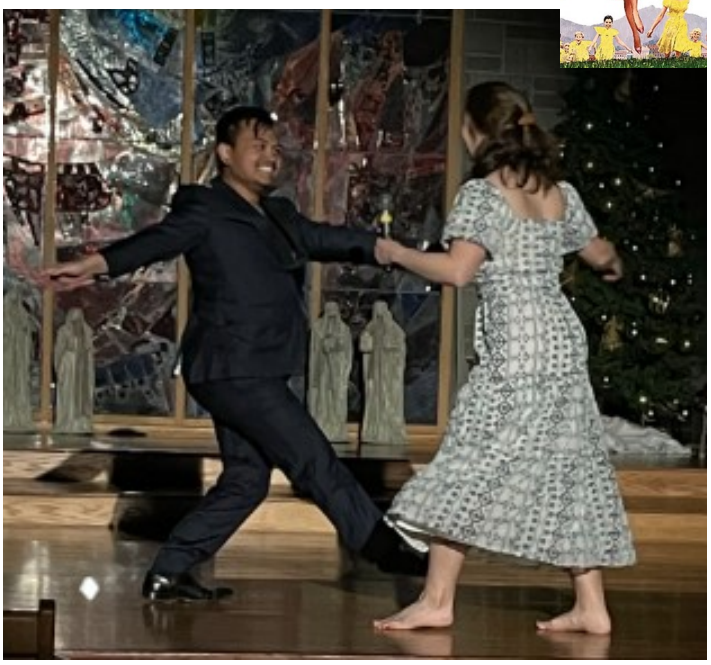
The venue is booked for next year, countdown is starting.

Diane Locke



Sing-a-long Sound of Music

Kathy Kitchen had the inspiration. She loves to sing and she knows *The Sound of Music*, a 1965 movie, is fabulous, has stood the test of time, and is full of music so many of us know.



Starring Julie Andrews, the movie is based on the real life story of the Von Trapp Family singers. It is filled with timeless Rodgers & Hammerstein songs such as *Do-Re-Mi*, *My Favourite Things*, *Edelweiss*, *Climb Every Mountain*, *So Long Farewell* and, of course, *The Sound of Music*.

Kathy got it all organized and the result was a great evening of fun for Humber Valley and our wider community on Friday, December 2. Lots of people were dressed up and three were awarded prizes for their costumes. Everyone sang and some danced!

The emcees — and performers — for the evening were Alanna Goodman and George Turnbull.

Thank you to all for your great ideas and hard work in making this evening such a success.

Susanne Hynes

God IS Love

Christmas is one of my favourite times of the year. I love the lights, the carols, hot apple cider, family traditions, rediscovering favourite Christmas tree ornaments and wrapping presents for people I love. But more than that, I love that it's a time of year when people seem to be a little bit more kind to one another, a little bit more generous… holding doors open, smiling and wishing each other "Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays" at coffee shops.

As humans, we are all drawn to love. Love is what we are created for! When people are kind to one another, when they are patient with each other, when we read stories of marathon runners who forfeit their chance to win and instead stop to help their competitor across the finish line.

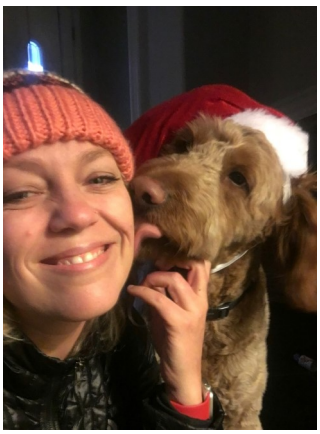
1 John says we love because God first loved us. God **IS** love- it's not just a characteristic, but God's very essence.

And what God loves most is US. Jesus came into the world to show us the fullness of God's love and to teach us a new way to live.

Jesus shows us the kind of love that has value because it calls us to sacrifice for others; to put people ahead of ourselves, to lay down our "rights to be right", to forgive people who have hurt us.

As we celebrate the light of Jesus entering the world, we are invited to bring every part of our lives — our fears, mistakes and dreams- into the light of God's love and receive healing, peace and hope.

Kate Brown



A Christmas Story

There was once a man who had been part of a small but loving family. Then, his brothers and sisters died as did his beloved wife. There were no children. He did not keep up with friends and he stopped going to church. He assumed the reputation of a Scrooge. Neighbours stopped trying to be kind to him. His telephone rang less and less and finally stopped altogether. Things he once believed to be true no longer were.

The one thing that still gave him pleasure were the birds who fluttered through the overgrowth of his yard. He watched them all summer and into the fall. He dreaded winter because Christmas held no meaning and even his birds seemed to disappear into the bleakness of the dark months.

Christmases came and went. He had begun to question what the fuss was all about years ago. Now, the treacly songs, the silly movies, the goodwill he couldn't muster simply annoyed him. And the business about the baby being born to save mankind took on the aura of myth and not a good one at that. Hermit-like, he was waiting for death.

It was an uncommonly cold winter that year. His windows frosted over except for where the small drafts emanating from radiators cleared them. A frigid wind started to blow on what he remembered was Christmas Eve and continued throughout the night. The next morning he looked out and his eyes widened as he saw a small flock of what looked to be robins huddling near his garage door. Robins in December, he thought. What is wrong with them? They will freeze.

He decided to try something. He opened his garage door with the remote. The robins were too cold to flutter away. He slowly and deliberately sprinkled popcorn, sunflower seeds and millet left from his summer feeder into the empty garage, starting at the open door. The seeds made a trail into the interior where it was warmer and protected from the wind. Then he watched anxiously hoping that the robins would figure it out and eat their way into shelter. But he waited and waited and none of the birds came in. A few smaller ones already looked frozen. He felt panicky, helpless, and then, like a diamond drill in his forehead, the thought came to him.

The birds needed another bird to lead them to safety; to reassure and rescue them from the cold and into the shelter of his garage. There was nothing he could do. It struck him that it must have felt this way to God. His people needed to be saved. HE had a solution. He sent a human, a tiny human being into the world. That baby grew up and became a leader. The myth suddenly had meaning for him and he felt a great roiling emotion in his chest.

Not all stories have happy endings and this one didn't. At least not that Christmas. But like Scrooge, the man's epiphany that frigid Christmas morning stuck with him. He began to feel what could only be described as gratitude for the baby born in Bethlehem. And he slowly, ever so slowly felt himself returning to the world where he rediscovered faith, hope and that greatest gift of all. LOVE.

Retold as remembered by

Cathy Wilkes

Our best wishes and congratulations
to all the people celebrating
BIRTHDAYS
and
ANNIVERSARIES
in November and December.

Outreach Update

The Outreach Committee at HVUC continues to support organizations locally, nationally and internationally.

Recent donations from the Capital Outreach Fund were sent to these Toronto service groups that assist women and children seeking safety:

Sistering - $400
Women's Habitat - $400
Ernestines - $400

Youth Without Shelter receives bread each month from COBS in recognition of HVUC's support of the Dorothy Ley Hospice.

WATER FOR LIFE

Advent at HVUC is synonymous with water. For a number of years we have donated funds to build more than 20 wells in Tanzania and Benin through **Gain International.**

With Canadian news about water problems on Indigenous reserves, we learned about an Ontario charity, **Water First,** that provides training for the maintenance of water treatment plants on reserves. This program results in water science knowledge for the graduates, improved service to their communities as well as employment.

Sounds like a "win -win".

Envelopes for these charities will be available at the church for your cheque or cash or you can donate by e-transfer directly. Indicate which charity you wish to support: Wells in Africa or Indigenous training in Ontario (Water First).

Gifts with Love 2022

Humber Valley United Church has been supporting the Jane Finch Community Ministries for many years. Rev Barry Rieder has preached at Humber Valley a number of times and has told us about their programs supporting many at-risk families in the neighbourhood. Each year, parents from that neighbourhood submit information on their children in the hopes that the *Chum Christmas Wish Fund* will provide gifts from Santa for Christmas morning.

To date we have collected $1200.00 which will mean Jane Finch will be able to purchase 25 gift cards ($1,000.00) to cover those on the waiting list plus a little extra money to support all activities of the ministry i.e. monthly food bank, vigils in the community, back pack program, emergency support, community events etc.

For those wishing to donate to this worthwhile cause, please mail, drop off or e-transfer your donation to finance@hvuc.ca. Make any cheques payable to 'Humber Valley United Church' making sure your name and address are on the cheque. Special envelopes are also available in the church lobby. Please indicate "Gifts with Love Jane Finch Community Ministry" on the memo line of your cheque or in the message of your e-transfer. We will then send another cheque to Jane Finch Community Ministries so they can use the money where it is most needed. Tax receipts will be included on your 2022 tax statement sent out in February 2023.

Help make this a season of blessings for the Jane Finch Community!

Fair Trade at HVUC

Crafts from Africa and Central America were sold on November 27 after the service.

Savuti brought beautiful pottery and weaving from cottage industries in Kenya and Zimbabwe.

CASA brought Christmas ornaments and hand knitting from Ecuador and Nicaragua.

Both of these charities provide retail outlets for the crafters that might not otherwise be available to them.

We also gave 6 computer items to CASA for their Starfish school in Nicaragua.

Thank you all for supporting these worthwhile projects.

Sally Jo Martin
and Barbara Clarke

Rescuing a Ruined Christmas

In 1976 we moved onto the street where I had spent my teen years; Mom and Dad now lived directly across the road. With that move came the transition of me hosting any future, family get togethers. Being younger I was happy to take on this happy chore....except Christmas 1989 gave me pause to reconsider.

Christmas usually began happily with my parents trudging across the road early in the morning to join us to see what Santa had brought and a gift exchange, followed by a happy, noisy family breakfast ... a tradition I always enjoyed. Coffees and (repeated) Christmas stories from my Dad and Mom always delighted the kids followed the meal. By about 10:00, however, the kids had usually drifted off to their rooms to play with their new toys and Bob went to the hospital to do rounds for the few, poor souls unlucky enough to be hospitalized at Christmas.

At this point, I was happy when my parents decided to return home and rest up for the family dinner later that day. Being pretty organized, I would mentally priorize the needed jobs before the next batch of family would arrive. That included cleaning and vacuuming up the living and dining room, loading the dishwasher, setting the dinner table and, of course, stuffing the turkey and getting it into the oven. The girls were on washroom duty and responsible for cleaning up their rooms. (In those days, Christmas gifts and stocking contents were laid out on their beds for visitors to admire...a tradition that disappeared once they hit their teens).

The smell of chopped celery, onions and spices soon filled the house as I mixed and cooked the stuffing on the stove prior to filling that giant bird. At last it was done and the remaining stitch went in. Into the oven and, I admit, I felt a little more relaxed at that point. I hustled about checking the house, making sure the girls didn't look like tarts with the new makeup they received, and pulling out all the side dishes previously prepared ready to cook as required.

Bob returned shortly after noon and commented upon entering the house, "I can't smell the turkey yet?" He thought it was a light hearted comment but my stomach fell. I couldn't either! I raced to the oven and upon opening the door was faced with a pale, lukewarm bird ... the bottom element wasn't working. A quick call to a true angel-friend electrician, confirmed that the element was done and there was no prospect of getting one at that point on Christmas day. I panicked! Eighteen people were coming at 5:00.

It seemed the whole street was either away or using their oven ... except my Mom and Dad! Hallelujah! I quickly scoured my cook book on how to speed up roasting time for the turkey and, with much anxiety, sealed it into a giant blue roaster with foil tightly enveloping the entire carcass. Slipping across the road with this giant load, I entered my parent's house much to their surprise. Dad was watching TV and Mom was reading. I pleaded my case and slipped it into their oven, setting it to 400° degrees as required. I explained I would be back to get it at 7:00 that they had no need to worry, still come over at 5:00.

Feeling a little more relieved, I returned home and now needed a shower, and a glass of wine. At 5:00 on the dot family members all started to arrive. Drinks were generously distributed and platters of shrimp and smoked salmon were devoured...obviously no hot hors d'oeuvres! By 6:30 the younger ones were getting testy and everyone was asking if they could help. I explained what had happened and that the turkey would be there in 30 minutes. I excused myself and prepared the vegetables and donned my boots to go get the bird.

Upon entering my parent's house, I again noticed the aroma of roasting turkey wasn't that strong! Again my stomach flipped ... and with good reason ... the oven now read 325°. At this point I was just going to stay there rather than face the hungry mob, but my seething head told me otherwise. I cranked up the oven to 425 and stomped home. Rudely, I blasted my poor Mom for tampering with the temperature control but out of the corner of my eye I could see Dad slinking down in his chair. My Dad, who never cooked anything but toast and scrambled eggs, admitted he had turned down the oven to 325 to save energy. He had never seen my Mom roast anything any higher.

Platters of appetizers all went. Adults were tipsy from all the refills. Kids fell asleep and were sprawled around the living room on couches and even the rug. Dinner was finally served at 9:00 to an exhausted and yawning crowd, with very little appetite. Everyone went home with huge loot bags of food and politely joked that some day we would all laugh at this entertaining string of events.

I'm still waiting to see the humour and still get a stomach ache thinking about that stressful Christmas.

Judie McMillin

Christmas Adventures with Air Canada

In September 1973, I moved to Winnipeg for a new job. While I was excited about my new position, adjusting to all the changes - new apartment, city, and province - not to mention the winter temperatures in Winnipeg, had taken some effort. I was therefore almost giddy with the prospect of returning to Ontario for ten days at Christmas.

My boyfriend Doug was going with me, and we were planning on some time with my parents in Tottenham, some with his in Ottawa, and the rest with our mutual friends in Toronto. We had booked our tickets a month ahead and were at the airport in lots of time.

After boarding the plane, the cabin crew made an announcement. It seems the flight had been overbooked. Air Canada had responded with a larger plane, but had not had time to update the numbers of either the crew or the supplies. They were therefore looking for volunteers to go without dinner, in return for free drinks on the plane and a fifty-dollar voucher. In 1973, $50.00 was real money. It was only 5:30 in the afternoon, the flight was only 2 hours and twenty minutes. We would be able to have dinner by 8:30. No problem. We put up our hands.

About 15 minutes after the harried crew had collected the names of sufficient numbers of volunteers, we heard another announcement. The flight would be delayed "briefly" for a "minor mechanical issue". "Briefly turned out to be close to two hours. It was 7:30 when we taxied down the runway. From there the flight was relatively uneventful – a few bumps here and there, but nothing out of the ordinary — until we got near Toronto. Then we started to circle, and circle, and circle.

Another announcement: "Toronto Airport is fogged in. We are going to Montreal." On we flew to Mirabel Airport, arriving past their normal opening hours. The airport staff had been extended for the situation, but all the concession stands were closed. The best we could do for food was a couple of bags of chips from a vending machine.

At Mirabel, we were loaded into buses and driven to Toronto Airport. In some cases, we drove right past the places people were actually going, such as Oshawa or Whitby, but no stops could be made. All in all, it was 14 hours from the time we boarded the plane until we arrived at Pearson. There we had to wait another 45 minutes for my father to come and get us. Don't forget, this was before cell phones, and we had to wait to get to a land line.

The following Christmas, Air Canada made a similar announcement after we had boarded the plane. Once again, they had overbooked, and didn't have enough dinners. It appears that such overbooking is a standard practice among some airlines, and helps them deal with the no-shows. Having learned our lesson, we kept our hands in our laps.

As the plane took off, we leaned back in our seats, content in the knowledge that this year, we would not be starving when we landed. Then we heard a noise, a cacophony of metal. Terrified at first that the plane was about to disintegrate, we whirled in our seats to see what had happened.

It seems a staff member had forgotten to latch the door on the cart that warms the meals. As the plane ascended, the door of the cart had come open, and about 40 dinners went sliding down the aisle.

Since that time, whenever I travel anywhere, I always carry a couple of cereal bars in my purse. At Christmas time, I add a candy cane.

Joan Belford

Welcome Claire Saunders and David Lang

On a late summer day, we were on one of our long walks along the Humber River trail. We had just watched the river salmon struggling to jump over the man-made barriers in search of their ancient upstream spawning beds. We chastised a bicyclist for racing across a narrow wooden bridge. And we decided on BBQed beef shish kabobs, with our classic tomato, onion and blue-cheese salad for dinner. How the subject of church came up, neither of us remember – but it did. And on that warm, late summer day we decided to check-out Humber Valley United Church.

There was much to recommend Humber Valley United Church. It was within walking distance of our home (we can see the church steeple from our front porch), and some of our close neighbours and friends were members and had spoken well about the church. And, as most churches were streaming Sunday services due to Covid, we had an excellent opportunity to check it out from the privacy of our home – volume low.

We were impressed by the casual atmosphere of the service, the infectious joy of Kate, and Drew Brown's ensemble with upbeat and soulful music. We loved the contemporary vibe which made Humber Valley seem welcoming and approachable for everyone across the rainbow, of all ages at every stage in their spiritual journey – something that was very important for us. We were especially impressed by Rev. Trevor's erudite, lively and thought-provoking sermons. After listening to several online services, we decided it was time to visit the church in-person.

We attended our first service on the second Sunday of Advent, 2021. You might think that a couple like us, who had attended so many church services over the years, would have been quite comfortable with this – but the truth was we were both just a bit nervous and unsure what we would find. However, once we entered the church our jitters quickly disappeared.

The vestibule bustled with people excitedly greeting one another. Many were attending service that morning for the first time since March 2020. The KN95's couldn't mask the smiling eyes, the elbow bumps and the enthusiastic welcomes, making us feel right at home. The service was lively and upbeat, and the congregation's mask-muffled singing filled the sanctuary. Rev. Trevor's sermon spoke to us about the joys of Christmas and the importance of community, and afterwards, we briefly introduced ourselves to him. Trevor's genuine warmth was inviting and comforting. We attended service the next Sunday and were surprised by how many people remembered us despite our masks. It was another wonderful service which we both thoroughly enjoyed. But with a resurgence of Covid, Humber Valley Church needed to close their doors the very next day. So, once again, we were back in the privacy of our home watching the service online – only this time, with the volume a little louder.

In March, when in-person services resumed, we began to attend Sunday services in-person on a regular basis. Soon we were making new friends and feeling more and more that Humber Valley was our new church home. When Kate Brown, and our other new friends, asked us to consider becoming members, we didn't have to think twice. Our participation in the New Members Sunday service was a day to remember for us both.

As churches seek to become more inclusive and reach out to younger members, something we completely support, we may not be Humber Valley's prime target market. We are a happily married, financially comfortable, 60-something couple of the traditional, "he/him, she/her" persuasion. Even so, we have felt so warmly welcomed at Humber Valley United Church for which we are both truly grateful.

While not exactly country mouse - city mouse, we come pretty close. Claire was born in Aylesbury, England and moved to St. Catharine's with her parents at the tender age of two. She completed her degree in nursing and afterwards relocated to work at St. Mary's of the Lake Hospital in Kingston. David is Etobicoke born and raised only a comfortable walk from Humber Valley United Church. He attended the University of Toronto and obtained his PhD at McMaster University in social psychology. After working for five years for Bell Canada in Ottawa, he returned to Toronto where he has lived ever since.

We met on a canoe trip on the French River, and soon had a Kingston-Toronto, long-distance relationship. In 2003, Claire moved to Toronto with her two young daughters, and we have been debating the relative merits of big city - little city life ever since. Humber Valley United Church

offers us a great compromise with a big city location but a small-city, community-focused charm.

Claire is an avid gardener with an eclectic array of garden beds. She is a passionate advocate of animal rights, both domestic and wild. And, if you are a little spider in someone's house, you'll want to be in Claire's house, because then you'll get carefully scooped-up in a glass and gently placed outside. If it's wintertime, no problem, Claire will put you in our furnace room! Claire is also a concerned environmentalist and is considered the Elstree Road expert on recycling. More recently, she has become involved in refugee support, and along with David and three others, has submitted a private application to bring a young, Afghani refugee to Canada, from Indonesia, where he has been living in limbo for years. In her spare time, what there is of it, Claire loves to canoe, read, follow professional tennis and go for long walks with David where she explains the undeniable benefits of small-city life.

David is a market researcher with his own firm. Over his 40-year career, he has had the privilege to work for both private and public sectors in the financial, tourism, telecommunication and retail industry sectors. David is currently semi-retired with the emphasis on "semi". He is passionate about Stephen Ministry and has served as a Stephen Leader since 1989. To continue this mission, David has recently joined Humber Valley's Stephen Ministry Team. During the pandemic, David began to explore cooking and now prepares a wide array of tasty delights. In his spare time, he loves to canoe, study history, work out at a local boot camp and go for long walks with Claire where he extols the benefits of the cultural and culinary diversity afforded by big-city life.

We are blessed by four children, three who are married, and one who is engaged to be married. Our daughter Crystal and her husband, Jorge, live in Hong Kong. Daughter Emily, and her husband, Michael, live in Bedford, Nova Scotia. Daughter Laura and her husband, Michael, live in their new house in Ingersoll, and son Stew and his fiancé, Sylvonna, live in their new house in Georgetown. Syl has two daughters, Audrey 9 and Margaux 7, and Stew and Syl are expecting a third child this January. So, in addition to all the other changes in our life, we are discovering the joys of being grandparents. Our kids are all thriving, and it is exciting to watch as their lives beautifully unfold.

We are so glad that we decided to check-out Humber Valley United that late summer day on the Humber River trail and look forward to meeting more of you and getting more involved at Humber Valley United Church in the months and years to come.

David and Claire

Play dates with Grandparents

Calvin, Ella, and Colby painted pumpkins in October in the Hearth Room. Calvin, Maddie and Colby had fun on the turtle in James Gardens in November.

The group usually meets at a prearranged place the last Saturday morning of the month. The children are 2 to 4 years old and attend with a grandparent.

If you are interested in joining the group, please get in touch with Kathy Kitchen or Cheryl Drake.

Fundraising Update

The Gift of Music
Toronto Welsh Male Voice Choir

February 5, 2023, 2:30 PM

We are excited that we are finally able to bring these wonderful voices to HVUC. The Toronto Welsh Male Voice Choir (TWMVC), established in 1995, gathered a group of like-minded men of Welsh heritage with a vision to transplant the spirit of traditional Welsh male voice singing to Canada, their adopted country. Having evolved over the years, TWMVC now showcases singers from many backgrounds, who cover a broad repertoire, which includes African-American spirituals, operatic arias, Canadian folk songs, plus Broadway show tunes, all sung off book in four -part harmony.

Over its 27-year history, The Toronto Welsh Male Voice Choir has performed some 300 concerts in churches, cathedrals, and concert halls across Canada, the USA, and the UK. Beyond concerts in every corner of Ontario, the choir has toured Wales in performance twice (2002 and 2013), and the Maritimes in 2005, performing for appreciative audiences in Nova Scotia and PEI. In 2008, TWMVC performed in a Welsh choir of 400 voices at New York's prestigious Carnegie Hall. The choir then circled the Canadian Rockies in 2010. TWMVC was the headline choir at the 2017 North American Festival of Wales in Rochester, NY. Pre-pandemic, in 2018, the choir enjoyed an unforgettable four-concert tour of Newfoundland.

Their concert repertoire evokes a simple a message: ***the things we share in common far outweigh our differences.*** How this world needs to be reminded of that right now!

Tickets for this concert are $40 each, which includes cookies and a mug of warm cider at intermission. Tickets will be available shortly, (watch KIT for the date), and would make a wonderful Christmas gift for the music-lover on your list. Or tuck a pair into your own stocking. We promise Santa will never tell.

Christmas Gift Baskets

Those creative ladies (Lynn, Kathy and Sylvia), who have been making the popular soup mixes for the last few months, have a nifty idea for December. They are selling Christmas Gift baskets, which will contain a jar of soup mix, a package of corn meal muffin mix, and a tea towel, all tied up in a basket with a Christmas bow. The baskets will cost $20.00 and will be available ***December 18***. To order, please contact Lynn (lynnjmanning@gmail.com) or- Kathy (ka_kitchen@rogers.com)

Gift Cards

By the time this issue is published, the Gift Cards that so many of you have purchased for Christmas gifts will be on their way. We hope that all the people who receive them enjoy the treats that they buy. I confess that most of my December Gift Cards will go to grocery stores for all the special foods that make Christmas such a wonderful time. I know this is not logical, but using the gift cards almost makes me feel as if I am getting the groceries for free.

When you are making your New Year Resolutions, why not resolve to use HVUC gift cards for your standard purchases in 2023? It does not cost you one extra cent, and the church gets 3-6% of the amount you spend. For further information, contact Lynn (lynnjmanning@gmail.com) or Kathy (ka_kitchen@rogers.com)

Empire Cheese
Pick-up Tuesday, December 13, 4-7 PM

Thank you for participating in our sale of Empire Cheese. There are going to be a lot of happy cheese-lovers in the HVUC neighbourhood this year. Your Gift Boxes will be delivered to the church **December 13,** and will be available in the lobby for **pick-up between 4:00 and 7:00 PM**.

Joan Belford

55+ Community Care Kits for Seniors

In addition to our virtual and in-person programs, the 55+ project also supports seniors 55+ living in the local community with practical care kits every month!

Thanks to your individual donations and funded in part by our grants from the Federal Government of Canada's New Horizons for Seniors and the United Church of Canada, we are able to provide nutritious foods and practical care items for over 500 seniors and families who access food bank services at Mabelle Arts Food Market and the Room to Grow foodbank located at Westway United Church.

Our community partners help us to reach seniors who are living below the poverty line, in our local community. We ask them what is most needed and then we arrange bulk purchases and deliveries. Often the need has been for fresh eggs and milk, and at holiday times, something that would be considered a special treat. We also set up a monthly booth at the Mabelle Food market where we are able to connect in person with seniors and also provide some practical and thoughtful items to bring some fun and cheer.

This past Fall we have shared "soup in a jar" kits for making homemade lentil soup at Syme Woolner Drop in Centre. Seniors and their grandchildren made jars full of soup mix to take home and share with their families.

In December we are contributing over 100 kilos of fresh whole chickens for seniors through the Room to Grow foodbank. While a whole chicken may be something we take for granted the staff at the foodbank tell us that clients are very excited and appreciative to receive fresh chicken as it is not an item they can afford.

To donate fresh whole chickens to the Room to Grow Foodbank click here.

We were able to share some lovely handmade hats, shawls and quilts along with packets of hot chocolate, with our neighbours at Mabelle Arts Food Market. Everyone was thrilled to receive something to keep warm on a snowy day. A little warmth for body and soul!

We will also be contributing towards the items in the holiday food bag at Mabelle market, where small items such as tea and coffee are considered a special treat.

We are so grateful for the important work that our community partners do everyday in providing for seniors and families who live in our community.

We are thankful to be able to support with practical gifts each month.

If you would like more information or to donate towards our monthly community care kits please contact Anne at 416 231 2263, or anne@hvuc.ca

You may use the donate now button or send cash or cheque to HVUC and specify 55+ community care.

Anne Pietropaolo

YWS GARDEN

Valerie had a very successful urban garden year in 2022. And probably the greatest success was the garden she grew with the young people at Youth Without Shelter.

She sent us this letter in November and attached some photos and letters from YWS. We thought you would love to see them. –**Editor**

Good morning everyone!

Our urban community garden growing season has officially finished for the 2022 season.

Please see the attached letters and photos from Youth Without Shelter. Our first growing season was a success! I so enjoyed working with all who attended throughout the season. Plans have already begun for next year and grant applications have been submitted. The youth have their list of what they would like to grow and are looking to expand the current garden. Fan favourites were potatoes(!) the herb and leafy green gardens and the edible flowers which were used in a master chef cooking competition held at YWS.

Thank-you HVUC for this fantastic opportunity!

Valerie Wood

"I'd like to thank Valerie and her team for volunteering their time to us at YWS to open our eyes to the possibilities of our own urban garden. This was such a great experience for all of us and we made great memories through this project. I know for a fact that myself, the youth and many staff are excited about what we can do next year!" - Khaleah

Dear Valerie,

Thank you so much for supporting Youth Without Shelter by pioneering the YWS Garden this year. Our youth were given an extraordinary opportunity to learn how to grow food in their own backyard, how to cook what they grew, all the while learning life skills such as patience, adaptability, sustainability. Both youth and staff are eagerly awaiting the time when they can plan out next year's garden and improve upon the knowledge learned this year. We cannot wait to see them take these skills with them when they transition to independent living and can grow food in their own backyards.

Thank you for giving our residents the gift to "grow through what you go through" here at Youth Without Shelter.

With best wishes for you and the people close to you.

Monika Fox
Director of Philanthropy and Engagement
416.748.0110 ext. 26
mfox@yws.on.ca

YOUTH WITHOUT SHELTER

November 4, 2022,

Humber Valley United Church Congregation
76 Anglesey Blvd.
Etobicoke, ON M9A 3C1

Dear Congregants of Humber Valley U.C.:

"The garden was so fun it made me very happy and when I had my hands in the soil it reminded me of farming back home in Kenya, thank you" – N

"Gardening is one of my new hobbies, when can we start again so we can grow sunflowers and pumpkins this time?" – Aliyah

"Thank you for teaching us how to grow food in our backyard" – Aneeqa

"I didn't know I was able to grow anything -- it was hard but it was nice to see the tomatoes when they start to turn red, and the flowers were nice for my plates in the YWS Iron Chef competition" – Stephan

Thank you so very much for sponsoring the YWS Garden this year. Our youth were given an extraordinary opportunity to learn how to grow food in their own backyard. As you can see from a sampling of youth comments above, the program had a huge impact on them. We cannot wait to see them take these skills with them as they transition to independent housing, and possibly even to their future occupations.

Thank you for giving our residents the gift to "grow through what you go through" here at Youth Without Shelter.

With best wishes for you and the people close to you.

Monika Fox
Director of Philanthropy and Engagement
416.748.0110 ext. 26
mfox@yws.on.ca

Lighting the Season

Humber Valley Church held a Tree Lighting Ceremony, "Light the Season," on Nov. 27 at 5 p.m., to mark the first Sunday of Advent.

Rev. Trevor Brisbin led a countdown and voilà — two huge Christmas trees with sparkling white lights and the beautiful stained-glass window at the front of the Sanctuary lit up! (Two young people helped the "miracle" of light happen.) He received a chuckle when he noted that he'd prepared a very short sermon for the occasion, just 45 minutes!

Drew Brown, our Director of Music Arts, was a jolly Santa, who led us in singing "Santa Claus is Coming to Town" and "In the Deep Midwinter."

Two very different choirs performed that night.

First came the Croatian Choir, whose perfect harmonies graced the carols, "Silent Night" in English and Croatian, "The First Noel" and a Croatian Carol.

The other choir was our very own Valley Voices. We sang one carol, "Angels we have Heard on High," and three Christmas singalong favourites, "Jingle Bells," "Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer," and "Frosty the Snowman." Kevin Curnock, Kate Brown's boyfriend, played an endearing Rudolph, while Nancy Roper gave an impromptu performance as Frosty. Thanks to Kate, our Director of Inclusion and Engagement and the Valley Voices Choir Director, for making Valley Voices a fun experience for all 40 participants!

Two young girls, Annabelle Billowits and Alexis Bryden, told a Christmas story. The text of the play is on the facing page.

As people left, each family received a set of Advent cards to help guide Bible readings and good deeds throughout the Christmas season.

The tree lighting attracted a large audience, including many people who aren't HVUC members. Many thanks to Trevor and Drew for organizing this, and to Kate, our irrepressible leader of the Valley Voices.

Colleen Isherwood

A Play for Advent

Hope

Peace

Joy

Love

Child 1: Are you getting excited about Christmas?

Child 2: Christmas? That's FOREVER AWAY... I need something closer to look forward to!

Child 1: Well what about Advent?

Child 2: Did you mean to say advent--ture? Adventure?

Child 1: You know, I didn't... but now that you mention it, advent IS like an adventure!

Child 2: how so?

Child 1: Well the whole point of the Advent season is anticipation, and preparation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus! And do you know how we mark that time?

Child 2: CHOCOLATE CALENDARS.

Child 1: Well yes, but what else?

Child 2: ELF ON THE SHELF

Child 1: I mean as a church community! Advent refers to the 4 Sundays leading up to Christmas, and each one has a special meaning.

Child 2: Hope, Peace, Joy and Love right?

Child 1: That's right! And we light a candle for each one, with prayers and songs that prepare our hearts for God to show us each of those beautiful gifts in our own lives.

Child 2: What a special way to get ready for Christmas! Maybe if I focus on the adventure of Advent, I bet Christmas will be here before I know it!

Child 1: And we can try to be living Advent calendars.

Child 2: I'm not sharing my chocolate.

Child 1: No silly, I mean for us to be Hope, Peace, Joy and Love to those around us!

Child 2: Oh THAT I can do!

Child 1: We hope you'll join us as we light the season and begin the adventure of Advent, preparing for all the gifts that come with this beautiful season of Love!

For our Refugee Family

Christmas Market

The Christmas Market, held on Nov. 27 immediately before the Tree Lighting Ceremony, was was a super success. Linda Grass now tells me that we are currently at $2,500.

All proceeds from the sale go to our HVUC refugee project.

The baking table was groaning. A special 'shout-out' to Sylvia Cohen who donated 30 of her amazing one-pound dark Christmas fruitcakes.

With an initial donation from Gail Hamblin of vintage Christmas decorations, additions swelled to cover five large tables.

A large Christmas tree donated by Roy and Joan Carscadden was given to our refugee family, who were excited to get it, along with a box of ornaments from the sale, and coloured lights.

I delivered it to them and they must have decorated it that very evening. Haroon says that his wife loves to watch Christmas movies on TV, so she was particularly excited to have a Christmas tree of her own.

Thanks to all who participated!

Carolyn Whiteside

Last year at this time Haroon, Seemera and Hania were in Turkey feeling hopeless and marginalized. They were worried and had nightmares about being deported back to Afghanistan, where their lives were at risk.

This Christmas Hania is in grade 1 with lots of friends and a feeling of security and safety. Seemera is learning English and in January is starting a computer software developer course and Haroon has had three interviews with CBC for a graphic design role.

HVUC has committed to supporting this family for a year which started in July. Our fundraising efforts to date, including generous support from the church congregation, mean that we raised just over half of the money needed to support our family for a year. Keep your dancing cards free for a pub-night-with-Drew fundraiser in the spring!

Erin Billowitz

Carolyn and Linda setting up the vintage ornaments table and moving the boxed Christmas tree. It has been decorated and is already being enjoyed in its full glory.

Meta and Ken Gilbert

The UFO group would like to thank Meta Gilbert, a long time member of St Lukes Church, for sharing a treasure trove of craft supplies that will keep us creating for the long haul. Meta and Ken Gilbert, were long-time and much-loved members of St Luke's church. Ken passed away in his late 90's several years ago. Meta celebrated her 100th birthday in July 2022. Sadly, she passed away shortly afterwards in July.

Meta and Ken were charter members of St Lukes – they started when the congregation was sharing the building at Martingrove Baptist church. They were part of the team that enabled the St Luke's church building that we all knew at Kipling and the Kingsway.

Ken worked for the Parks department and happily shared the knowledge he gained from his work.

Meta was a member of the Glee Club when she attended Oakwood Collegiate. She worked in life insurance in her young adult days, then became a homemaker when her children were born. She was a life member of both the UCW and the Etobicoke Horticultural Society.

Meta and Ken have a daughter Sharon and a son David, 3 grandchildren and 3 great grandchildren.

Barbara & Suzanne Clarke lived across the street from Meta for 30 years and they were very close – Meta considered them as an extra daughter and grand daughter. Barbara has been helping Meta's daughter, Sharon, tidy Meta's belongings in the house that she and Ken lived in for 60+ years. Thanks to Meta, Humber Valley has received a treasure trove of supplies such as:

Knitting yarns for the UFOs craft group

- Quilting fabrics for Laureen Kinnear's quilts that are donated to Mabelle Arts and Dorothy Ley
- Sewing fabrics for Sylvia Cohen who creates bags, aprons, potholders, etc to sell to support the church and our refugee family
- Greeting cards, both blank for Wanda Sekunda to send out and used that can be cut up for gift enclosure cards or Sunday School crafts
- Christmas decorations and other household items that were sold at the recent Vintage Decoration Sale.

UFOs our Craft Club

The UFOs craft club continues to meet on Sundays after church, from noon-1 in the Hearth Room. We have a laptop connected to Zoom so our online members can participate with us.

Carol Jones continues to be prolific in her knitting – she has provided a wealth of winter items to Ernestine's Women's shelter: 2 children's sweaters, 6 women's hats, 2 women's hat/scarf sets and a baby jacket.

Lynn Manning learned in June that she had a new grandson on the way, so she pulled out her crochet hook immediately and has a blue blanket ready to go when the baby arrives in mid-January 2023. Lynn and her hubby were invited to Ottawa for Hallowe'en with her grand daughter, Aisling, so Lynn searched far and wide to find orange cotton yarn and made a pumpkin coaster. Aisling's response was "I LOVE IT!"

For information about the UFOs Craft Club, please contact Lynn Manning (lynnjmanning@gmail.com)

Nancy Roper

At left, Sylvia Cohen showing off Meta's donated yarn. At right, some of the donated fabrics.

A Memorable Christmas

We were living in Fleet, about 30 miles south west of London. It was about 1970. We had entered a national competition to come up with a Christmas slogan for the Coop. Judith suggested we submitted as our entry:

"It pays to bag the divvy"

A few words of explanation. The Coop was a British organization founded in the 1800s. The full name was Co-operative and the idea was that cooperative societies would be established in local communities and owned by the members. The local Coops built stores to sell food and other supplies to their members who were paid annual dividends (or divies) based on their purchases. The more profit each local Coop society made, the greater the dividends to their members. At its peak, the Cooperative network of stores and services were a formidable part of the British retail landscape. Although some coops still exist today they are a shadow of their former selves.

We belonged to the local coop society in Fleet. Having submitted our entry in October we forgot about it. So it was a great surprise when we received a letter just before Christmas from the competition organisers to say that we had won first prize.

The prize was to be a visit to our local coop food store where we would be given a large bag and would be able to scour the shelves and could cram the bag full of food items in30 minutes.

Naturally we were very excited. We contacted our local store and arranged to make the trip one evening after the store had closed at 6.00 pm. We arrived on the given evening with our young kids in tow and were met by the store manager and some of his staff and given a huge red Santa-sized sack. It was like competing in a time-trial race.

As soon as the manager said "go" off we went and food went flying off the shelves. The local store staff members were egging us on to take the most expensive products. And we completely filled the bag and needed help to lug it to our car.

When we got home we had a lot of fun unloading our haul and deciding what to store for later use and what to consume in the immediate future. And of course a lot of our Christmas food supplies were taken care of. It made for a very memorable Christmas as we enjoyed our free food with family and friends and as we recounted our coop story.

But it didn't stop there. When we returned to Canada in 1971, we packed our red Coop bag. Later, when Judith was planning the Christmas Daytimers events at the church she would bring out the Coop bag and fill it with goodies for Santa to deliver to each table of guests in Steed Hall. So we have gained great mileage out of our red Coop bag.

David Dallimore

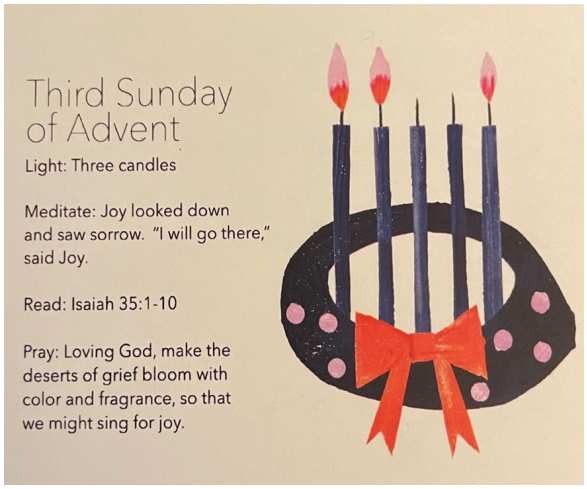
Living Advent Calendar

This year for Advent we are doing a Living Advent Calendar as a church.

These hand-illustrated cards include words from scripture,
a bite-sized meditation, and
a simple prayer or
a simple, engaging daily practice.

Read and contemplate one each day of Advent.

If you don't already have a set,
call the office at 416 231-2263.



Daytimers

Monday, Dec. 19
11:30am

Lunch with Santa
Christmas Party

We are excited to celebrate the Christmas season with you at Daytimers. We have a fun program planned with a Christmas sing along featuring David Dallimore accompanying on piano with all your Christmas favourites; a delicious turkey lunch to enjoy, with all the trimmings; lots of fun and games and of course a visit from Santa!

M E N U

- Turkey with dressing and gravy
- Mashed potatoes
- Green peas
- Cranberry Sauce
- Pumpkin pecan dessert
- Selection of Christmas cookies

Come in your festive outfit and bring a friend! It's going to be a great way to celebrate together!

If you would like a drive please contact anne@hvuc.ca or call Anne at 416-231-2263 x31. For those who are unable to attend in person we would like to deliver our meal to you and you can enjoy the presentation online. Meal delivery will take place Mon, Dec. 19, 10-11:00am.

SHARE THE LOVE

- **A Freewill donation to cover the cost of the lunch and program would be gratefully accepted. Supplies for lunch and program are approximately $8 per person.**
- **Consider giving a donation toward the cost of one or more lunches to support this ministry with our congregation and larger community and help us share the love!**

REGISTER HERE or Contact Anne Pietropaolo, Seniors Program Coordinator, or Beverley Conner
416 231 2263 x31 anne@hvuc.ca

Humber Valley
UNITED CHURCH
www.hvuc.ca

As a season, Christmas can be a wonderful gift. It can also be a uniquely difficult time for those of us who have experienced a significant loss or heartbreak.

On December 22 at 7:00pm, Humber Valley United Church is going to hold space for those within our church family and those within the larger Greater Toronto Area who are feeling the struggle of the season.

You are invited to join us (in person) for an evening of honest reflection, authentic lament and glimmers of hope. You will be invited to light a candle amidst the darkness and find comfort and rest wherever you are.

May Christ be born in all of us this season.

Trevor and the
Humber Valley United Church Pastoral Care Team

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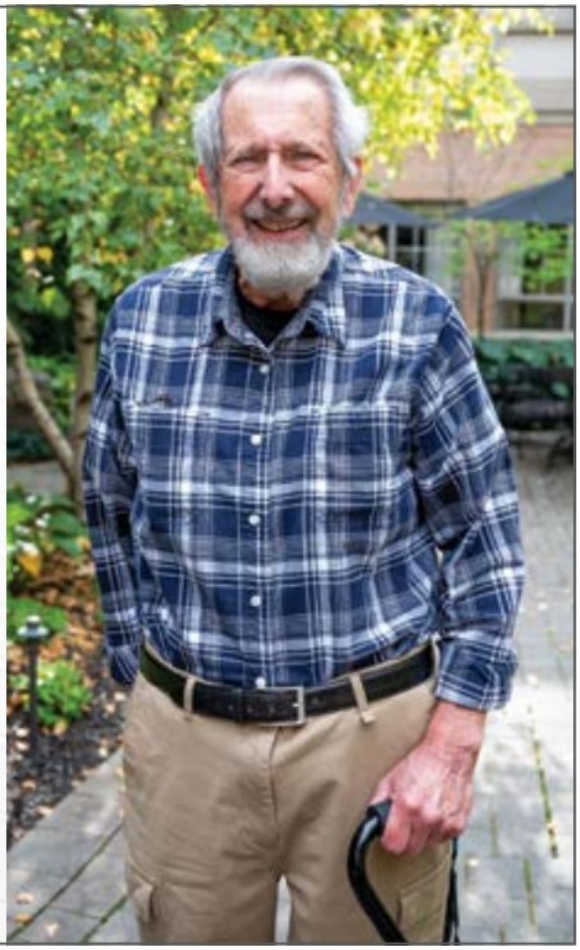

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Connections

Christmas in the Valley

Rev. Trevor Brisbin has been preaching a unique and challenging series entitled ***The Lost Story*** Sundays in the season of Advent: at 10:30 am.

November 27—The Survival Story

December 4—A Heroine Story

December 11—An Economic Story

December 18—A (Super) Natural Story

Join us in Sunday services in the Sanctuary at Humber Valley United or watch the services anytime on YouTube. If you missed some of these, you can still see them here.
It's a whole new way of looking at Advent and the Christmas story.

Thursday, December 22 at 7:00 pm—Gift of Hope

Christmas Eve, Saturday December 24

Family Service 5:00 pm

Candlelight Service 10:00 pm

Christmas Day, Sunday, December 25 10:30 am

New Years Day Sunday, January 1 10:30 am

Humber Valley
UNITED CHURCH

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