

Jubilation!

Jubilation! is the newsletter of Jubilee United Church
40 Underhill Drive * 416-447-6846 * www.jubileeunited.ca

Notes from Norm

I don't know about Christmas...

Isn't that a hopeful way to start these reflections? I know that as your professional, trained, steeped in tradition and faith MINISTER, I should know about Christmas.



But I don't know it all. In the midst of a November marked by loss in our community; in a time of political unrest and social discord; in the face of disquieting environmental events; and on one particular day as I was preparing my home and yard for winter, I began to think about all that I don't know about Christmas.

And it's a lot.

As I was carefully raking and bagging the leaves out front, I realized that I'm not sure that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. People (especially young people) ask me quite often, **"Was Jesus REALLY born in Bethlehem?"** In answer to such an earnest query, I rely on my many years of experience and training, my exhaustive study of theology and scripture and I tell them, "I don't know!" I'm not saying that he wasn't born in Bethlehem, but it is odd that we call him Jesus of Nazareth and a Galilean, if he was actually born in Bethlehem. Some wise scholars think that Luke is just trying to connect Jesus to King David by having him born in Bethlehem, connect the baby Jesus to the long history of the Jewish people and God's relationship with them; Jesus is part of a continuum, not just a single event. I don't know.

What I do know is my faith has nearly always been nourished when I recognize my connection to tradition.

It helps me to think of myself as part of a continuum, connected to the wisdom and the power of the stories from the past. As I have sought to deepen my appreciation of Christmas over the years, I have found that tradition has been of great value to me. To recognize that my life, my faith, aren't just about me, but that I am somehow the product of everything that has come before... and that I will also be the ground from which all new things will spring, is humbling. I think it's that kind of thinking that led John to begin his Gospel with, "In the beginning was the Word..." As I put my bags of leaves out for pick up, I realized that I may not know for sure where Jesus was born, but I do know that his birth and the stories that we tell about it assure me that I am not alone. We are all part of something that began long ago and will continue far into the future - bigger than we can begin to imagine.



As I started to put away the furniture from the backyard, I was thinking about Mary and the question that people always ask. **"Was it really a virgin birth?"** Often, they continue with something like, **"Isn't it more a translation thing, like the original word was used for young woman or girl, kind of like 'maid' is used by some people when they talk about a young woman in general?"** Again, when I've been asked this by one of those pesky kids, or just by someone trying to get in front of me in line at Starbucks, I have quickly reviewed my many years of studying Greek and Latin; all the time that I have spent reading about Hebrew and Aramaic, and



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then, putting my glasses on my nose in a very scholarly way, looked the questioner over and intoned imperiously, "I don't know".

I don't know if it was a virgin birth; I don't know if Mary was in any way special or just like any of us... I have no idea if angels sang or shepherds rushed down from the hills. I really don't know. What I do know is Jesus did not "come to be" in a traditional way, because although part of the tradition, Jesus and his way were brand new. What Jesus presented: That God is with us, in our midst, in our poverty and pain, in our joy and peace, in our homes and lives – not as ruler, but as a vulnerable and loving companion...this was new and unheard of. This was not "how it had always been", and so I'm not surprised that he would come to with us in a unique and peculiar way. I am not surprised that people needed to talk of him in ways that seemed impossible to the rest of the world, because he was doing, living and revealing something new. Not just your ordinary guy, so how could he be born in an ordinary way?

"Why a baby... wouldn't it have made more sense for God to be revealed as an adult?" I get that one, too... often from those same kids. Pesky kids.



The thing is, Jesus is new. God's presence in vulnerability, appearing in the margins (displaced, refugee, child, no political franchise) and offering an alternative solution to the isolation and struggle of life, something other than wage a war, get more stuff, be a "winner", was something entirely new.

The prophet Isaiah might have understood when he said "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel." That is to say, "This new relationship with God will not be like anything you've seen before... It's so new that it hasn't been born yet, and it's so new that how it comes to be won't even make sense – so don't try to make sense in the old ways, be ready for something new". Christmas is not Santa or Saturnalia; it is something very new: New ways, new hope.

What does all that mean? I don't know. But as I got the furniture put away, the lawnmower stowed for winter and the snow-blower ready for what lies ahead, I realized that I do know that Christmas invites me to look for God's presence in unfamiliar places. Like mangers. Like the children of virgins. Like... The words of someone that I'm supposed to be helping, but their words bring me wisdom and comfort; like how I see God in the face of the man who makes faces at babies; the person in the office who goes out of her way to get the best "Secret Santa" gift; the vulnerability that comes with real doubt, truth, and conversation; the love that is revealed when people worry about someone's comfort, security, peace, and joy

even before their own. I look around at a funeral and see such love that Christmas starts to make sense; I listen to voices that I've never really heard before and hear unfamiliar ideas and Christmas starts to make sense in ways that I simply didn't know before. I hear something new... I am invited into new hope.

Packed up, I started to get the Christmas lights out (not ready to light them, but it might be nice to get them out before the snow starts to accumulate). As I was untangling the usual strings of lights, I thought about the questions that usually come just after Christmas Day.

So, what about the Magi? Are they for real? How many were they? Did they really bring Frankincense, Myrrh, and Gold?

And in my best Santa impression, I chortle "I don't KNOW, I don't KNOW, I don't KNOW, I don't KNOW". Sadly, it doesn't really sound much like "Ho! Ho! Ho! Ho!", but at least it's



honest. I don't know where the Magi came from. I don't know if there is any truth to a story about strangers bringing Jesus' gifts. I struggle with a Star that hangs over a tiny stable... but I do know that the Christmas Story assures me that if I open my eyes, I will see signs of God's presence. Christmas promises me that if I look into tradition, but also keep my eyes peeled for something brand new, something that I've never even imagined before, I will have an experience of God in my life. And then, having found that presence and experience of God's love, my best way forward is to bring my own gifts. I don't have Gold, Frankincense, or Myrrh on hand... but I do make a decent potpie, I can shovel snow, I'm a good guy on a committee, I can sing a bit, I have wealth that I can share... I am a pretty good listener... I have experience that might help others... I have the gift of patience, and so I can show up where people need me and just wait for the right moment. Like you, I have a great many gifts and what I now know is that when I offer them to others, Christmas becomes very real.

I hope that this is a real Christmas for you this year, whether you know it all or not... and I hope that we get to spend some of it together.

Merry Christmas,

Norm



Jubilee Christmas List

(be sure to check it twice!)

ULTERIOR WORSHIP

Mondays, December 3rd and 17th @ 8:35 p.m.

Quiet, intimate worship with Word, Prayer,
and music (Benjamin Gabbay on the piano).

A chance to relax, breathe, and let Christmas arrive gently.



TORONTO CHORISTERS CHRISTMAS CONCERT

Tuesday, December 11th @ 7:30 p.m.

No Admission Fee, but lots of familiar Christmas songs and yuletide joy,
Presented by our great friends, the 100 voice Toronto Choristers

Bring Family and Friends; there will be ample opportunity to sing along!
(Donations will be gladly received)



A SERVICE OF CAROLS AND LESSONS

Sunday, December 16th @ 10:30 a.m.

The Jubilee Choir will lead the service
for the Third Sunday of Advent
with Carols and Lessons.

Some familiar songs, some surprises, and many delights,
as we share the Christmas Story together.

CHRISTMAS CAROLING on the LABYRINTH

Tuesday, December 18th @ 7:00 p.m.

Stand Outside on the Labyrinth (or inside in the Garden Room if you're not
sure that the spirit will keep you warm) and sing classic Christmas Carols and
Songs with your neighbours and maybe a trumpet or two!

Not to worry, there will also be Hot Chocolate to keep you warm.



Service for the Longest Night

Thursday, December 20th @ 7:30 p.m.

Because some of us need a little quiet time during the season
to grieve; to heal...

and to invite God into our darkness.

An intimate service that offers time and space,
for those of us feeling a little left out.

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

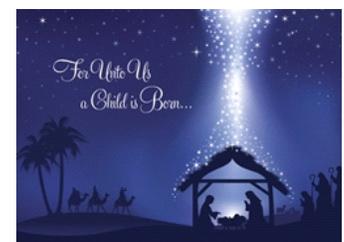
Monday, December 24th

Christmas Pageant and Worship at 10:30 a.m.

Children's Service at 4:30 p.m.

Family Service at 7:30 p.m.

Communion Service at 11:00 p.m.



Council Report

Council has held two Council Meetings since by last report. These Council meetings took place on Tuesday October 9th and Monday November 12th.

Please see Norm Seli's report in Jubilation for the Ministers' Report. Since my last report, we have had held the Covenanting Service for our intern Jason Meyers, as well as successful events for ArtCraft, Bridge Day, Muffin Church and the Scotiabank Waterfront Marathon. We also had a full house for our Remembrance Day Sunday Service with a very insightful presentation by Ed Rutherford.

In the Treasurer's Report during the October meeting, Gary Norris let us know that we received \$12k for the GST refund for the last half of 2017. The St. John's bills continue to require some effort to resolve them. Gary did not attend our November Council meeting but he did send us the August 2018 financial reports. Income receipts are 6% over budget due to slightly higher donations, and expenses are on budget. Therefore, our actual deficit is \$63k, which is \$22k less than our budgeted deficit of \$85k. Under new business, Norm Seli presented a proposal for Jubilee to be involved with the UCC (United Church of Canada) Halo project. Through discussions with us, the project will document Jubilee's activities and then measure our value to the community. The \$2,500 cost will be offset by \$2,000 from the EDGE network. Council members expressed concerns over the potential time commitments and benefits for this project. Our next step will be to invite Mark Daly (from EDGE) to come to our December 2018 Council meeting and tell us more about the Halo project.

Council discussed and then approved a motion to support Cheryl Colford who is studying to be a Lay Licensed Worship Leader. Over the next two years, a team of four people will meet with Cheryl regularly to provide her with support and encouragement.

Reports from Daniel Gaito, Chair of Property, in both our October and November meetings highlighted the committee's plans to address the repairs and improvements to our building which were included in our Covenanting agreement with St. John's Church. Currently, the repairs and painting of the auditorium, high roof repairs, Friendship Room flooring repairs and costs for the removal of the boiler, are either partly or wholly dealt with at this time. Daniel's summary then divides the upcoming repairs into our first, second and third priorities.

- Our first priority will be any much-needed repairs to the building, property and rooftop HVAC system.
- Our second priority will be to review of our needs for kitchen and storage upgrades and then complete any necessary work.
- Our third priority will be repairs and/or replacement of our water heater, flooring, toilets, and HVAC systems as well as upgrades to our furniture, lighting, parking lot and signage.

Council expressed some differing opinions on our priorities for property improvements. We plan to hold discussions with the Covenanting Agreement and Finance Committees to help us decide on our priorities and establish an achievable timeline.

Under his Finance/Investment Committee report, Alan Bone reported that our investments are down slightly due to the economic environment. He encouraged Council to submit their pledge cards, increase their pledges and get others to do the same.

The Finance Committee will soon be making an announcement to ask the congregation to "Remember the Church at Christmas". On Sunday, November 18, Norm will also ask the congregation to submit their pledge cards and increase their contributions. Jubilee needs additional donations to lower our deficit and ensure our longevity. Council mentioned that there has been some push back from people who object to having the deficit numbers printed in our Sunday bulletins. The Finance Committee will continue to publish our financial results in the bulletin to keep the congregation informed and encourage donations.

Concern was expressed by Council over the timeliness of the budget given the plans we have for additional programs in 2018. Alan Bone will collect budget input from Council members and we will discuss the budget further at our December Council meeting.

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Iona Williams reported in October that Outreach continues to hold well-attended community dinners. Over 100 people came to our Community Table Thanksgiving dinner.

Charlie Scott has established a Social Committee with 15 members with Ann Howes as Chair. The committee sent out surveys and has determined that the congregation is interested in day trips, a murder mystery evening, and concerts. The Social Committee will now plan these suggested events. The committee intends to be self-funding.

Sarah's Circle UCW group has introduced a Helping Hands program whereby their group will assist people from our church. They are starting with an introductory dinner next week.

Fran Crabe informed us in our October meeting, and reminded us in November, that there will be a UCW gathering on November 20th, 2018 which will address the use and benefits of medicinal cannabis. The next Council meeting is on Monday December 10th 2018 in the Garden Room at 7 pm. Thank you and enjoy our upcoming Christmas season. I hope to see you all at our Christmas dinner on December 1st



ADVANCE NOTICE
JUBILEE SPRING BRIDGE 2019



At
JUBILEE UNITED CHURCH
40 Underhill Dr.

BRIDGE INSTRUCTION BY JOHN RAYNER

ONE DAY ONLY: **FRIDAY, APRIL 12, 2019**

PROGRAM:

9:15 am Get name tags and meet over coffee

10:00 - 12:00 Bridge Instruction:

12:00 - 1:00 Lunch (included in the fee)

1:00 - 3:00 More Bridge Instruction:

COST: \$60.00 cash or current cheques payable to Jubilee United Church

Information on Registration

**We suggest you register by contacting
Marie at 416-222-9329 or mmcroe@rogers.com**

**If this is not convenient there will be a Registration Day at
Jubilee on Friday, February 1, 2019
From 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.**

SINGLES, PAIRS OR GROUPS OF FOUR CAN BE ACCOMMODATED
REGISTER EARLY AS THIS EVENT NORMALLY FILLS QUICKLY



**Don't always have time for Study Groups
or Lectures at the Jubilee,
but still want to dig deeper into your faith?**

Wouldn't Home Delivery be great?

What do you think about an afternoon or evening of **Food, Friends, and Faith?** So, far we have met with **UCW Groups, Church Folks, Non-Church folks... we've had dinner, tea, a BBQ... and people have been talking.**

If you would like to host a dinner, lunch, dessert, wine and cheese, bbq, or a pot-luck for 6 to 8 friends, Rev. Norm and/or our intern, Jason Meyers would love to join you, present a topic of your choosing, and lead a discussion. You can pick any topic you like, but allow us to suggest the following that are already packaged and ready for delivery:

**Bible Basics ● Prayer ● Atheism ● United Church of Canada
Jesus ● Easter ● Christmas ● Baptism/Communion
Living in the World Faithfully ● Evil and Suffering**

This is good for any age or stage of faith; Jason and Rev. Norm will bring knowledge, experience, handouts and/or video material that we will explore together. They will come to your home, or if you prefer we can arrange a time at the church and either pot-luck or order take out. **For parents of young children, we can gather at Jubilee and arrange babysitting at the church.** The idea is to get people together to talk about some of the things that matter and to provide easy access to the knowledge and experience of Jubilee's resident theologians.

So, put some friends together and get Jubilee to Deliver!

Don't have a group of friends in mind? Tell us what topics interest you and when we get more than 4 interested, we'll find a date and do it at Jubilee.

To make a date or for more information, contact

Rev. Norm - (416)447-6846 x103 nseli@jbuileeunited.ca

After December, when the Christmas Lights go out – it's going to seem awfully dark... cold even. And we, we usually do our best to warm things up at Jubilee.

Starting Tuesday, January 8th, Tuesday Soup Lunch will be returning. Through the balance of January, February, and into March, we will be offering:



**Soup and Bread in the Garden Room
on Tuesdays from 11:30 am – 12:30pm.**

Join us. Bring a Friend.

We eat, we talk - who knows what friendships might occur or what radical plans might emerge!!

We are always looking for volunteers to help with set-up and clean-up.

AND of course, we love to have help making soup.

If you would like to help with the set-up and clean-up OR make soup for 60 people, please sign up in the foyer and/or speak with Rev. Seli.

There is a \$60 subsidy provided for supplies for anyone making soup this year.

The Benevolent Fund



This is the time of year when we get the biggest surge in donations for the Benevolent Fund. Thank you. As most of you know, our lives are fragile, and sometimes it just takes a little nudge to bring things crashing down... but sometimes it just takes a little help to keep things together and weather the storm. The money will be used to help people sleep with less dread, stay warm, or hang on a little longer until change can really happen. The gifts will affect

women, men, children, strangers, refugees, hungry, hurting, and even some folks with whom you share coffee on a Sunday morning.

The Benevolent Fund is a modest amount of money that is shared at my discretion with those in need. I try to share this resource with those who might otherwise fall through the cracks: those who have medical or financial needs that cannot be met through other agencies; those who have a one-time challenge that threatens their future. Sometimes we pay a bill, sometimes we share grocery cards... sometimes we make a plan and address a more systemic problem. Sometimes, we just give because we can, and we hope... Thank you for all that you have done in the past and should you wish to contribute in the future, donations can be made directly to me, but also to the Church office, or in the Offering Box in an envelope marked "Benevolent Fund". These donations will be added to your other church donations, and you will receive a Tax Receipt.

In the words of our friends, "Thank You."
Norm

Service on The LONGEST NIGHT



A service of Light
in the midst of Darkness

Thursday, December 20th 730pm

@Jubilee United Church

**A service for those needing time to grieve, to heal;
to recognize the love and presence of God in the darkness.**

Gentle music, gentle thoughts...

Respecting the Dark, we look for the light.

Report from the Music Director

The music program has been quite active this fall. A special thank you to all of the choir members for your dedication to weekly rehearsals, challenging music and attention to details. We are fortunate to have a roster of fine choir leads who provide choral leadership to their respective sections. Veteran soprano lead Maria Criscione has been stellar this fall, and she is taking on a more active role in providing vocal warmups at the beginning of rehearsal time. Cheron Christmas-Lafleur, our new alto lead, is no stranger to the choir or to Jubilee. Her work as choir president and librarian is crucial and has enabled the choir to achieve higher levels of organization and focus. Cheron has been featured as a soloist and a member of duos, trios, and quartets – as the repertoire demands. Dylan Hillyer, with his vocal jazz background, has offered some wonderfully creative Offertories this season. His leadership and style are an integral part of the group. We are honoured to have Douglas Gallant as our bass lead. His gorgeous baritone anchors the choir. His versatility as a soloist and a small ensemble member is very much appreciated. Recently we have also welcomed Elda Scott and Lori Mater, two new sopranos who fearlessly joined us in mid-season!

A special thank you to the choir for their wonderful support of our special Remembrance Day service, which commemorated the centenary of Armistice Day, November 11, 1918. Their support during the congregational sing-along and their compelling reading of my anthem, *Da Pacem Domine*, helped support the tone of the entire service. We are looking forward to our special Christmas music service which will take place on Sunday, Dec. 16 during the regular 10:30 a.m. service time. The choir has been working hard to prepare an eclectic offering of beautiful music for Christmas.

It has been a great joy to perform with the talented musicians from within the congregation. We had great fun with our October Muffin Church service, and it is gratifying that we have so many Jubilee folks who enjoy making music. Additionally, I want to thank soprano Christine Petrie, who performed a special duet with her father, flautist Douglas Stewart, on Thanksgiving Sunday. We are thrilled to be welcoming Christine back to sing some Gospel Christmas music with the choir on Sunday, December 16.

The choir continues to grow! We rehearse most Thursday nights from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. and Sunday mornings from 9:45 to 10:15 a.m. (before the regular 10:30 a.m. worship). We are always looking for new members – especially men! Please see me after church on Sunday if you are interested in auditioning.

This past summer and early fall, I have met with each choir member, and enjoyed the opportunity to hear each choir member individually and offer suggestions as to how to improve their individual singing and musical skills. It has been very gratifying to have some one-on-one time with each member!

A big thank you to everyone who participates in the Rimbala music and movement program for seniors, which is designed to reduce the incidence of falls and develop cognitive plasticity. We have two classes at Jubilee on Thursdays throughout the year. The beginner's class meets at 10:00 a.m. in the auditorium and an intermediate level class meets at 4 p.m. If you are interested in trying a class, please contact me for details (416.709.8381).

Blessings to everyone,

Daniel Rubinoff, Director of Music

CLAXTON FRUIT CAKES

Once again the Church will be selling those world-famous cakes.

Prices the same as last year:
3 bars in a box - \$20.00.
Single bar - \$8.00.

For more info, or to order,
contact Bob Nicholls @
416-445-2642.

All net proceeds go to the
Benevolent Fund.

OBSERVER MAGAZINE

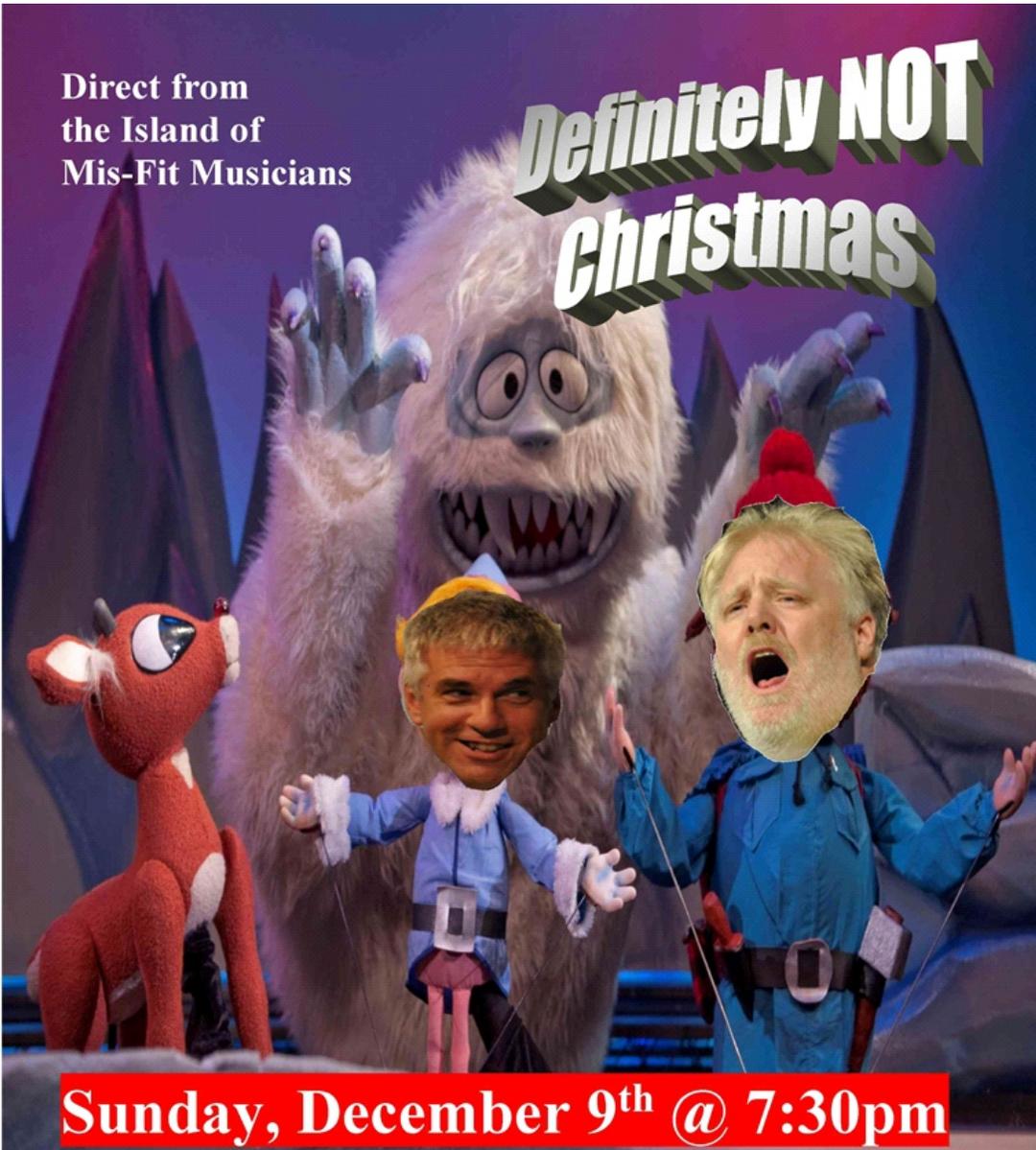
It soon will be time to renew your subscription to the Observer. A notice will be sent out to all current subscribers, shortly, to find out whether or not you wish to renew.

If you are not currently a subscriber, I would highly recommend you consider being one. There are many timely and informative articles in each issue that are well worth reading. The cost is \$25.00, for twelve issues a year.

For more information, or to subscribe, contact Bob Nicholls at 416-445-2642.

Direct from
the Island of
Mis-Fit Musicians

Definitely NOT Christmas



Sunday, December 9th @ 7:30pm

Join the Howling Heretics to hear a story that is NOT the story of Christmas, with soundtrack of pop songs from the past 7 decades... This is one Christmas Special guaranteed NOT to be warm and cuddly.

www.jubileeunited.ca

Open Doors

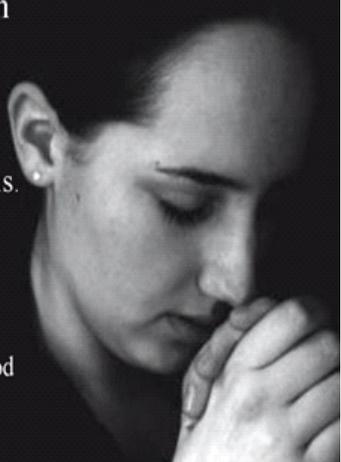
Wednesdays 430 – 630 pm

The sanctuary is open,
and you are invited to sit...
to pray...
to be still and know that God is.

One of our ministers will be there
if you want to talk

There are candles that can be lit
and time that is just for you and God

Jubilee United Church



Life Events

Celebrations of Life:

Chris Foot	October 20
Howard Hollands	November 13
Mary Ruse	November 20
Dick Westwood	November 22
Mel Williamson	November 23

Marriages:

Paul Hawkins and Bernice Smith	September 14
Joshua West-Gordon and Michelle Spencer	October 6

Jubilee Advent Calendar 2018

Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday

25. End the church year with Jason preaching @1030am
26. Brag about how your team won the Grey Cup.
27. Drop by Jubilee at 7pm and help us Decorate!
28. Surprise someone with the funniest Christmas Card you can find.
29. Write a letter to a childhood friend.
30. Do something special for a stranger
1. Come to the Jubilee Christmas Dinner 630pm
2. Celebrate the First Sunday of Advent with Communion. 1030 am.
3. Join us for Utterior Worship at 835 in the sanctuary
4. Invite someone to lunch.
5. Read Luke 3:7-18 and wonder what you would change in the world today
6. Tell someone the Christmas Story in your own words.
7. Send 6 Christmas Cards - not emails, real cards with real writing.
8. Tell somebody that you love them
9. Join us for Definitely NOT Church at 730pm
10. How about new "Cause" : A group or situation that needs your help
11. Come out to the Toronto Choristers Christmas Concert 730pm
12. Share your favourite Christmas memory with someone
13. Wonder about the Christmas Story... why is it so important?
14. Watch a Christmas Movie or Special on TV
15. See if you can spend the whole day NOT shopping. You deserve it.
16. Come to a service of Carols and Lessons at 1030am
17. Join us for Utterior Worship at 835 in the sanctuary
18. Bundle up and join us on the Labyrinth to sing Carols at 7pm
19. Call somebody with whom you haven't spoken in at least a year.
20. Join us for a Service of the Longest Night honouring our grief - 730pm
21. Sing 6 Christmas Carols through the day
22. Just look at the stars....
23. Come hear Jason preach about Mary at 1030am in Worship
24. Between Kids, Family and Communion Services, try 2!
25. God is with us. Look and see
26. Consider all the people who have made a difference in your life this past year
27. What remains un-done this year? Make a call, mend a fence, finally do it...
28. Write some thank you notes for the kindness and gifts you have received
29. Get ready for Pajama and Sweater church tomorrow....