

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

Editor: Elda Scott *November 2023*

Notes from Norm

November has not been much of month. Not for me anyway. **I've been sick.** My wife was already smirking at my "man cold" that would likely incapacitate me for a week and annoy her even longer with my sniffling and whining, complaining, and constant requests for her to "make me some soup, please... I just can't do it".

Then it turned out to be Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV). And it hung on for three weeks. What's more, she got it, too, and was sick for almost as long as I was. She did not like that.

Both of us sick. No energy to even have original thoughts; we both just slept and slept. When we weren't sleeping, we were napping. The aches and pains were no fun, the coughing was frustrating, but what was most debilitating was the complete fatigue. I don't like rest.

At this time of year, I have services to plan, stuff to record, cookies to bake and a house to decorate. I should be busy shopping for gifts, buying gifts, wrapping gifts... realizing that I've bought the wrong gifts, so, unwrapping, returning, re-shopping and re-wrapping. My wife and I should be planning Christmas dinner, but sweet Morpheus simply would not allow it this November.

But in often fevered sleep, I did dream. I dreamt of absurd things that entertain the mind when I am sick – half forgotten memories and high school friends whose names elude me wander through my mind. And Christmas.

Christmas. Not the "shopping, decorating, making cookies" Christmas (a lovely tradition, by the way). No, I dreamt of the "Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail, the incarnate deity" Christmas - (thank you, Herald Angels).

Dreams are places where we can dare to wonder – after all, they're not real. Dreams are places where the real world and imagination come together; where things don't always make rational sense but do make emotional and spiritual sense. For me, dreams were the perfect way into Christmas this year.

I dreamt of the absurdity of it all.

The clearest and most complete revelation of the God comes to us in the child of transient refugee parents. They have no security, no place, and no power. Yet, in the example, teachings and the very BEING of their son, we can find hope (better than security); we find a place of belonging and peace and we find love – more lasting and persuasive than any power in the world. **This is the stuff of dreams**.

How absurd that a single first century Jewish boy, a world and many lifetimes away from my experience, should be able to speak to me, challenge me, comfort me and invite me to recognize the divine in my life. It makes no sense that his life should impact me so, or that his



sacrifice should move me to give more of myself and increase my trust in a God that I cannot see with my own eyes. But there it is... absurd and dream-like, but I know it to be true.

If I am ready to accept that this little boy, who became a man, should truly be called the "son" of God, then just maybe there are some other absurdities to which I can be open. It is absurd for me to imagine peace all around the world, certainly these days. It is absurd that I might imagine a world where poverty is not fatal or lasting, but managed and transitory. **The stuff of dreams**. It is possible that I might forgive my neighbour who so insulted me four years ago, or my aunt who has never once given me the time of day. I just might be able to find some divine delight and spiritual succor in this commercial craziness. I just might be able to forgive, reach out and even love a little more than I thought I could. **The stuff of dreams**, I know, but so is Christmas, and it's real. (Also, you have no idea how pleased I am to have used the word "succor".)

I dreamt of the reality of it all.

At Christmas we celebrate God's revelation in our midst, as a child. An infant. Vulnerable and inarticulate.

This great gift from God, this outpouring of divine love could not, cannot survive without our attention and nurture. It was, and is, up to us to recognize the presence of God in a manger. It was, and is, up to us to nurture and love this gift, or else it will surely perish. God appears in our midst, not to take over, but to invite our participation. We have to be the words, for the child cannot speak; we have to offer our warmth, or the child will freeze; we have to offer nurture, or the child will grow weak. At Christmas in 2023, where are we being invited to give voice to those cannot speak? Where are we invited to share our warmth? Where is our nurture required? Where are we being challenged to recognize God's presence?

Surely the story of Christmas is inviting us to do more than read an old story, but rather relive it again in a new time and place. In other words, we are invited to make this story real. I know, **the stuff of dreams**... and yet...

I dream finally of the joy of it all.



To be invited into the act of creation with God. For surely, that is the invitation: as we make the story of Christmas more than a dream, we are creating. As we speak for those the world ignores, we create awareness and justice. As we share warmth with others, we create hospitality and community. As we share our nurture, we create life. More than dreams, real life with hopes and potential, opportunity, and value. And, as we do any or all of these things, we make dreams reality. The strange, peculiar story of Christmas becomes our story, and it inspires not only our dreams, but our reality as well. We recognize God's presence in others and even in ourselves. That's the dream that continues, even now as I am over the virus. What could be more joyful than that?

So, my fondest Christmas wish for you this season is that you have time to dream and that your absurd Christmas dreams become reality.

Merry Christmas in advance.

Norm

Greetings from the Music Ministry!

by Jeannie Wyse

I can hardly believe that it is November already! It has been a busy and exciting fall so far.

- Thanks to **Diane Leah** and **Julie Michels** for helping to make October 22 an uplifting service.
- We all enjoyed worship and music-making with the community of Forest Grove on October 29.
- Remembrance Sunday on November 5 was beautiful. The choir performed *The Choir Invisible* and **Allie Jeffery** sang *Faure's Pie Jesu* to commemorate those who dedicated their lives to this country.
- And we celebrated new members and a very special trio of baptisms on November 19.

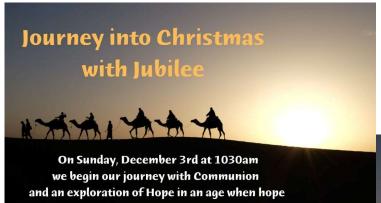
The choir continues to welcome new members. **Roz Espin** and **Chelsey Bowler** have joined our alto section this fall. Rehearsals are on Thursday evenings from 7-9pm in the sanctuary. You don't need to sightread or have prior experience; just a love for singing and a willing spirit.

Don't forget to get your tickets to "a NOT so Silent Night", our fabulous Christmas Concert on Saturday, December 9, at 7:30pm! They're back - Broadsway (Heather Bambrick, Julie Michels and Diane Leah) will be our special guests once again, along with their band! Our own section leads will also be featured along with Patti Jamieson. It's going to be an amazing event and tickets are on sale after Sunday services, as well as through the church office and on Eventbrite.

We look forward to the Advent season of Joy, Love and Hope. **Nicole-Joy Fraser** from the Beaver Creek nation will bring the spirit of our Indigenous peoples into worship on December 10 and **Dianne Clare's quartet, Moving Parts**, will be our guest on December 17.

Christmas Eve has long been one of my favourite days of the year and it will be busy with a 10:30am morning service, as well as an evening service with choir at 7:30pm and the traditional 11:00pm service.

We are a growing and thriving community indeed!



we begin our journey with Communion
and an exploration of Hope in an age when hope
feels like a great challenge.
Mystery, Hope, Music and Story:
All part of our journey into Christmas

www.jubileeunited.ca

On Sunday, December 17th at 1030am
we continue the journey and wonder about Mary
and Joseph, are they anything like us? Really?
Additional Music provided by "Moving Parts"
Scripture, Wonder, Music and Prayer
all part of our journey into Christmas
www.jubileeunited.ca



Journey into Christmas with Jubilee



On Sunday, December 10th we explore
The Huron Carol from an indigenous perspective
with story teller, drummer, singer and
oshkabewis Nicole Joy-Fraser.
Music, reflection, learning and prayer
- all part of our journey into Christmas
www.jubileeunited.ca

Journey into Christmas
with Jubilee



On Sunday, December 24th there is something happening that is just what you are looking for!

1030am, Join the choir and everybody else to put on a Christmas Pageant without warning or rehearsal!

730pm, Join the Choir, the Community and folks of all ages for a "pull out all the stops" celebration of Christmas

11pm, Join Rev. Seli for a quiet time of reflection and Communion as we usher in Christmas Day at midnight

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Jubilee

Jubilee

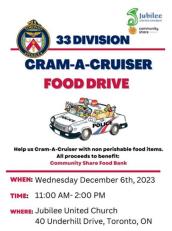
MISSION & SERVICE

by Pam Lock

On the four Sundays of Advent, we recognize and celebrate the hope, peace, joy, and love that will come with the birth of Jesus. For many of us, the celebration includes gifts to our families and friends.

In this time of global economic instability, climate change, and acts of war, we know that what we take for granted is not available to everyone in our local communities, other Canadian locations, or in faraway places that we know only from news reports.

The Mission and Service of the United Church of Canada invites us to share our bounty not only at Christmastime but throughout the year through its GIFTS WITH VISION catalogue. The gifts range in variety and price, from Food Security for Indigenous Elders in Alberta (\$20) to Operation Backpack in Ontario (\$40) to A Kindergarten in a Refugee Camp in Lebanon (\$60). The printed catalogue has an assortment of gifts that givers in all age groups can purchase. The on-line version (giftswithvision.ca) has even more suggestions to help us transform lives in Canada and around the world. Every Gift with Vision provides support for a specific Mission and Service partner. Thank you for helping to bring hope, peace, joy, and love to our world. Please speak to me about getting a catalogue.



Brookbanks for African Grannies by Jeanne Kennedy



On Saturday October 21, Brookbanks Grannies hosted a lovely celebration of the 20-year anniversary of the Stephen Lewis Foundation. As most people know, the Grandmothers-to-Grandmothers Campaign is an essential part of the foundation. Brookbanks Grannies have been part of this campaign with Parkwoods United Church since shortly after its inception in 2006. This was an intentional part of Jubilee's Outreach, in this case International Outreach. Brookbanks for African Grannies worked with five other Toronto grannie groups.

Jackie Richardson spoke to the guests about her experience attending the inception Gathering of Canadian and African Grannies in 2006 in Durban, South Africa

We had over 140 guests enjoying cake, coffee and tea, and the bubbly beverage. The Adrinka Farm Ensemble, our wonderful African drummers and dancer, wowed us all. Grandmothers and their supporters came from all over the GTA and southern Ontario for the afternoon. Many thanks to the Jubilee family for your support by your presence, your donations, and your generosity.



Special mention and thanks must be given to Barb Secord for her gracious leadership advice and participation in our event. Stay tuned for the notice of our next event in 2024!



Christmas Tea at Jubilee Thursday, December 14th at 2pm

Jubilee

Alterior Worship



A Relaxed afternoon with Friends.
provided by the Jubilee Cares Team
Transportation is available:
speak with Rev. Norm by phone (416)447-6846
or Email (nseli@jubileeunited.ca)



Coffee Drop In Tuesdays 1-230pm

> JOIN US IN THE GARDEN ROOM, YOU NEVER WHO WILL MEET

ULTERIOR WORSHIP

The First and Third Monday of Each Month. Casual, approachable worship led by Rev. Norm Seli in the sanctuary at Jubilee. Come as you are, relax, breathe and leave no more than an hour later feeling refreshed and connected.

Mondays at 630pm.

Ulterior (Adj. from the Latin Ulter): Lying beyond what is evident, revealed or avowed.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Jubilee United Church Board of Trustees is currently seeking replacements for three anticipated vacancies. The following trustees plan to step down at the end of this calendar year as their respective terms of office have been completed: Co-Chairs Elizabeth Clarke and Charles Scott and trustee member, Rai Remmel.

Role of the Trustees

Fundamentally, trustees are responsible for acting with legal fiduciary responsibility for the protection of the assets of Jubilee United Church, including, without limitation:

- insuring physical assets,
- maintaining workplace health and safety,
- entering all contracts, including, without limitation, rental, employment, dependent contractor, independent contractor, on behalf of Jubilee United Church,
- establishing and maintaining workplace policies, including, without limitation, return to work, return to rental and return to church, including OSHA, First Aid, Fire Safety,
- human rights,
- protecting and investing the financial assets of Jubilee United Church and related matters, and reviewing reports provided by the treasurer.

Trustees are covered by D&O insurance type coverage so long as they act reasonably and prudently within the scope of their duties and responsibilities. Meetings are held quarterly and the term of office is for two years.

If you have an interest in serving the church on the Board of Trustees, please speak to Jeanette May or any of the above Trustees.



On Sunday, November 19, we celebrated the baptisms of Christopher Petrie, Will Petrie and Hector Reid. We also welcomed new members including Will Petrie, Krista Oks, Roz Espin, Christine Petrie, Matthew McGeorge, Hector Reid, Anne Taylor and Bryden McGeorge (all in the picture along with Rev. Norm) and Pat Lansche and Anne Froude who are not in the picture. A great day and a promise that we will continue to grow and find new ways to share God's love.

Did you know that our Jubilee Cares team connects with folks by phone on a regular basis?

Just to check-in, say "hi", see if folks might want to be on the prayer list or if there some way that Jubilee can help them connect to activities or spiritual growth. Mostly, it's just a friendly call. If you might want to join our team of callers, or if you or someone you know might want to be called, you can contact Rev. Norm by phone (416) 254-0583 or email (nseli@jubileeunited.ca), and he will make the connection.



How can you keep engaging your faith on-line at Jubilee?



Sunday virtual worship services are presented Sundays at 10:30am on our YouTube channel. You can find the link on the Jubilee website: www.jubileeunited.ca. The service can be watched any time after it has been premiered, using the same link.

Our Sunday service is available as a podcast. We do a little editing to maximize the audio experience

and it is available on Sunday mornings at the same time as the virtual service is available. The link is also on our website using the "Podcast" button, or you can find us at jubileeunited.podbean.com





Our Sunday service is also available by phone. You can dial directly to (416) 219-8749 and the podcast version of our service will play from beginning to end. Call any time to hear the latest service, we promise no busy signals.

On our YouTube channel (and on our website) you can also access Norm's 20-30 minute daily meditations (Monday-Friday). https://youtube.com/c/normseli In the past 3½ years, Norm has read and wondered his way through Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Genesis, Exodus, Romans, 1st Corinthians, 2nd Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians and Collosians... also second trips through Mark, John and Luke. Join him and see where he goes next.





These meditations can also be experienced as a podcast. Again, a little editing, some music and the promise of NOT having to look at Norm talking, make these podcasts a popular option. The podcasts run about two weeks behind the video meditations.

You can follow Jubilee United Church on Tik-Tok, Youtube and Instagram









Norm, what's going on with the Forest Grove/Jubilee amalgamation?

A lot of people are asking that very question. They see about a dozen Jubilee folks having meeting after meeting. They've participated in a couple of events with Forest Grove folk (they seem very nice!) and they've heard all kinds of rumours about music programs, ministers and changing everything!

Well, I speak with no authority. I speak only as your minister and one who has been to a number of the aforementioned meetings. The first thing that I want to say is "You're right, the folks from Forest Grove are lovely people". While not great in number, they have lots of experience, wisdom and enthusiasm. The second thing that I want to tell you is that the reason you haven't heard anything is that we don't really have anything to report. Right now, we are getting close to completing an "Amalgamation Agreement" that we can take to the Region for approval, and then, we can take it to you. And Forest Grove can take it to their people, and we will vote on whether this is something that God is calling us to do.

As we have been going back and forth about what kind of church we can be together, there has been all sorts of talk about music programs and staffing, building improvements and changes in our day-to-day life. I assure you that many, if not most, of the things contemplated have been adjusted, removed from the list or have become inspiration for something new. I think I can say with some confidence, that there is no plan to replace our choir or music director. We have wondered about how our two music programs might work together, but it's not an either/or situation and we have some very creative ways of adding to our programs without subtracting. You'll have to wait until we get it sorted, but I can say that all of the leaders involved, Jeannie, me and Kye Andrews (Forest Grove's Director of Music School and Sunday Music) are excited about working together and creating something new.

There is no version of an amalgamation agreement that leaves me as the only minister caring for our congregation and (as far as I know) no version that suggests getting rid of me. I am excited about the future.

As we get to know the folks and culture of Forest Grove, they are getting to know us and our culture as well – how we intentionally built our church so it can used by the broader community and not always appear like a church; the windows that allow us to see the world and the world to see us clearly without barrier. Forest Grove appreciates the wisdom that we have gained through our creation as an amalgamation, and the amalgamation that took place with St. John's United Church six years ago. And we appreciate Forest Grove's commitment to community and hospitality, personal and corporate worship.

In January and in February you will get to hear actual details, get some answers to your questions and then, when everybody knows what is being offered, we will vote - not about whether it is a "good deal" for our communities but whether this is something to which God is calling us. And then, together or apart, Jubilee and Forest Grove will go into the days ahead following God's spirit into the future where we continue to share God's love and change the world.

So, hold on for a little longer. Please know that your leaders are excited about the possibility of building something faithful and remarkable together. 2024 is going to be a remarkable year.





In 2019, **Bob Chisholm** did some remarkable in-depth research and created a very complete history of Jubilee United Church. Looking back at the histories for our founding congregations, Bethesda, Donminster and Victoria Village United Churches, as well as St. John's United. "**Researching our Roots**" is 64 pages of history and pictures going back into the 1800s and telling the amazing story of how Jubilee came to be.

You can find this labour of love on the Jubilee website under the "About" tab, "Our History". Or you can email nseli@jubileeunited.ca and Rev. Norm will email you the pdf file. You can also ask to have one printed by calling the church office (416) 447-6846. It makes inspiring and thoughtful reading as Jubilee considers a new amalgamation and partner for the future.

The Benevolent Fund

It's important to me that this NOT appear to be a campaign for funding. This update is included in every Jubilation newsletter to let you know about what your money has been doing, not solicit for more. Any



money donated is appreciated and used and I do my best to NOT keep a balance, but instead keep the money active. That has not been a problem in 2023, as the needs have been greater than ever before. I often donate the honouraria that I receive for weddings and funerals to the Benevolent Fund, and this year I've sadly had more funerals, but I have been able to give more and so have you. Thank you.

This fund reaches out to people who are left out of the mainstream. It is used to help those who are in less "dramatic" straits, but for whom a little bit of financial help can keep them from getting into deeper trouble or despair.

We have helped with some respite support, technology needs, school books, transportation and helping one person secure an apartment. As always, we've provided a lot of grocery cards and helped cover several specific bills that have allowed people to keep the lights on; the roof over their heads – an increasing challenge for far too many.

The Benevolent Fund is modest and discreet; there are no reports made or records kept; it is used entirely at my discretion. It is my policy to shy away from repeat requests, and to try and keep the amounts given, modest, so that we can reach as many as possible and not turn people away when the funds are depleted. Support from the people of Jubilee has been exceptional and you many never know the people that you have helped; but then again, they just might be sitting beside you in church one day. Thank you for all that you have done in the past and should you wish to contribute in the future, donations can be made to the Church office or in the offering box in an envelope marked "Benevolent Fund" - you can also e-transfer to admin@jubileeunited.ca or use Canada Helps and simply note "Benevolent Fund". In the box or through the office assures that you will get a tax receipt... to me directly is not as reliable. (I do forget to write things down from time to time).

Thank you for making a difference in lives of people who are eating and sleeping a little better because of you.

Norm

Sacred Giving, Sacred Receiving

Even after all this time, the Sun never says to the Earth: "You owe me."

Look what happens with a love like that: It lights the whole sky.

Fourteenth-century Persian poet Hafiz

In the heart of this ancient verse by Hafiz, I felt a truth that has altered my perspective on life. All life on our planet depends on the gratuitous outpouring from the sun, which it offers unconditionally, providing the energy for photosynthesis in plants, the heat making our atmosphere temperate, and less apparent features such as solar wind, which shields us from dangerous levels of cosmic radiation. The sun's continual outpouring makes all life possible. We don't pay for it, control it, or generate it. We can only receive it with appreciation and gratitude.

Acts of giving, kindness, and love enrich our lives and the world as a whole. The joy of generosity is not just in what we give, but also in the love and compassion that flow through us as we give. When we open our hearts to the needs of others, we discover a wellspring of tenderness that transcends the act of giving itself.

But, for many of us, being on the other side of the exchange is harder to accept. The act of sacred receiving can be just as powerful a role as the act of giving. When we receive with an awareness of our interconnectedness, we invite the abundance of life to flow through us. In that moment, we can experience a profound and sacred joy.

One of the foundational concepts of the United Church of Canada is the Trinitarian shape of God. This positions spiritual power in a circle, not as hierarchical or top-down. Both the outflowing (giving) and the inflowing (receiving) are necessary elements of this dynamic and relational shape of God.

Love is an infinite, inclusive flow of giving and receiving. God is an event of communion. God is relationality itself. Love is a dynamic, a process. *Richard Rohr*

Our desire is that giving to Jubilee will be a joyful experience for you and that contributing to this community will be a sacred act of partnership. The inverse is also true: that receiving from Jubilee will be a joyful experience and that being supported by this community will be a sacred act of partnership. Both sides of this relationship are acts of generosity and flow.

We believe spiritual wisdom is part of the commons, for the benefit of all. This is why we aim for money never to be a barrier to accessing our teachings and programs. This is made possible by the giving (and receiving!) of generous people like you. We are deeply grateful for your participation at all points in this dynamic and interconnected process.

Adapted by Valerie Winters from Ben Keesy, CAC "The Mendicant" Fall 2023, Vol. 13 No.4

Jubilee Offering Envelopes

While there are many ways to give, many folks like the weekly predated pre-numbered offering envelopes. They are a convenient, timesaving method and reminder system all rolled into one. If you've gone to online giving or have signed up for PAR, we thank you, but if you still prefer the envelopes, they are still available. If you would like a box for 2024, please contact the church office by phone or email.



LIFE EVENTS

Baptisms:

Hector Reid November 19, 2023 William Petrie November 19, 2023 Christopher Petrie November 19, 2023

Marriages:

Marlene Britton and Clyde Husbands November 4, 2023

Deaths:

Richard Brethour September 1, 2023 Thelma Bayley November 3, 2023



Charles Dickens is ready to present one of the famed platform readings that packed auditoriums in Europe and North America. And so, he begins his beloved Christmas classic:

"To begin with Marley was dead... Old Marley was dead as a doornail... This must be understood or nothing wonderful can come of this story I am about to relate."

Ebenezer Scrooge is a miserly businessman who cares nothing for Christmas cheer, until one Christmas Eve he is visited by three spirits; the ghosts of Christmas past, present and future who set out to show Ebenezer the error of his ways.

Join Dickens as he takes you on Scrooge's ghostly journey to redemption.

A Timeless Holiday Classic!

Recommended for all ages.