



An Advent Prayer

Submitted by Sheila Anthony

As streets fill with shoppers
Bright lights and tempting offers
Christmas songs and children's laughter
You lead us along a different path
To a desert river and a Prophetic voice
A call to repentance
A call to service
A call to immerse ourselves
In living water that will never run dry
A call to prepare a way in our own lives
For the Saviour of the world to enter in
To know the touch of tender mercy
And rest in your forgiving love.
For your faithful prophets
And your Living Word
We give you thanks. Amen

FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD, THAT HE
GAVE HIS ONLY BE- GOTTEN SON, THAT
WHOSOEVER BELIEVES IN
HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH, BUT HAVE
EVERLASTING LIFE. FOR GOD SENT NOT
HIS SON INTO THE WORLD TO CONDEMN
THE WORLD; BUT THAT THE WORLD THROUGH
HIM MIGHT BE SAVED.

JOHN 3:16-17

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Trinity United Church

6689 Road 38

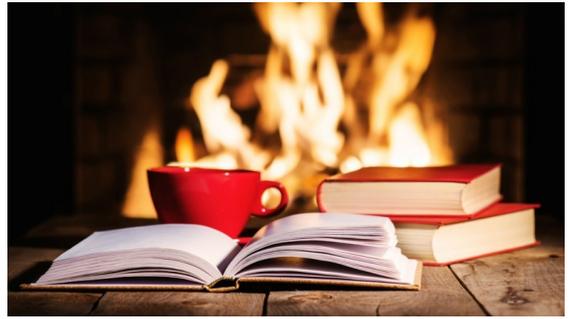
Verona, ON K0H 2W0

Phone: 613-374-2777

office@h-vpastoralcharge.org

Stories of Christmas

Submitted by Linda Brown



Reading the Christmas stories of long ago, and bringing them into our adult Christmas this 2023 season, may revive family memories of twinkling lights, warmth by the fire, delicious smells from the kitchen, and mouth-watering foods on Christmas day. They may also remind us of the gifts of anticipation, of excitement, of a child's innocent belief. These feelings were often generated through story, both oral and written. We adults need those feelings this Christmas. Stories told us of a gift-bringer named Santa, and other donors called shepherds, the Magi, and of an amazing miracle gift the Baby Jesus.

Let us not allow the chaos of forces beyond our control in our world rob us of these ancient sensations of well-being.

Rather let us ground ourselves in the traditions of Christmas lights, Christmas church, Christmas carols wherever sung, Christmas giving of food, time and money -and -Christmas story.

The following are some recommended Christmas readings, stories told and retold because they kindle LOVE at a time when it seems in short supply...

- 1) Always "**THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS**" - read aloud with gusto, recited from memory. Take turns reading. Memorize 8 lines each and then recite the whole thing. Read several versions to enjoy the illustrations. Act it out in your living room with your grandkids. Ad lib your own lines. Make it hilarious as in "I don't care who you are, get those reindeer off my roof"!
- 2) Google the **NEW YORK SUN EDITORIAL** from 1867 titled "**Is There a Santa Claus?**" Will it convince you? It convinced me. If not, write your rebuttal in the spring edition of Trinity Connected.
- 3) "**THE BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER**" by Barbara Robinson. Yes, you may well be moved to tears at the tender ending. I read it aloud to Carleton in sections every year and laugh and sniffle anew.
- 4) Short story "**THE GIFT OF THE MAGI**" by O. Henry. It can be read on the internet under that above title, or get a public library copy. Then on the internet, read the fascinating and inspiring story of O. Henry's life. Does it relate to our own life? Also, later in the New Year when we're deep in snow, ice, cold, read O. Henry's longer hilarious story "**THE RANSOM OF RED CHIEF**". Did you know any kid like that in your childhood? Were you one? Tell us in the next issue of Trinity Connected.
- 5) There are many other wonderful reads out there - Amhal and the "**NIGHT VISITORS**" about a little Arab boy; "**THE OTHER WISE MAN**" by Henry Van Dyke; the sweet little "**SHOEMAKER AND THE ELVES**" tale.
- 6) The **ABSOLUTE MUST READ** is found in the King James version of **THE HOLY BIBLE**. Read aloud Luke Chapter 2, verses 1 to 17. Picture yourself a young child, sitting in church perhaps Christmas Eve, absorbing these words; your whole family, perhaps generations with you. Now allow yourself to be overwhelmed with gratitude for all you have been given over a lifetime. Give thanks and MERRY CHRISTMAS this year.



Wishing **everyone** who celebrates a birthday this month and in the upcoming months a very happy birthday!

**Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you.
May God's richest blessings
fall upon you!**

Inez Dartt	December 2
Shirley Ellison	December 17
Millie Cuthill	December 19
Jean Pritchard	January 9
Kathleen Goodfellow	January 13
John McDougall	January 17
Ann McDougall	February 6

Flourishing: Old Ideas, Daring Connections

Submitted by Ian Mackay

Recently, three members of our congregation, John McDougall, Ian and Jane Mackay attended a one-day workshop at Crossroads United Church in Kingston, which was led by our moderator, the Reverend Dr. Carmen Lansdowne. She was assisted by a couple of other officials from our national church office. The workshop focused on the theme of flourishing, especially as it can be experienced and developed in the life of our church communities. Flourishing is a dynamic reality that is rooted in belonging. It means living with purpose and joy, and bringing bold collaborative solutions to our world's challenges.



The moderator is bringing this conversation to the United Church of Canada, inviting us to connect with one another in hope, with a deep conviction by a belief that, despite all the challenges of church life in this day and age, we can move from discouragement to transformation, from languishing to flourishing. Discussions focused on questions like "Is our church flourishing?" "Is our church contributing to the flourishing of our various communities?"

As a church denomination we seek to live in deep spirituality, bold discipleship and daring justice, linked from coast to coast to coast in ministry that transforms us and the world around us.

As a congregation we hope to address these questions seeking ways and means to flourish more effectively. This will be a focus of attention in the coming year.

The Legend of the Candy Cane

Submitted by Sheila Anthony

Many years ago, a candy maker wanted to make a candy at Christmas time that would serve as a witness to his Christian faith. He wanted to incorporate several symbols for the birth, ministry and death of Jesus. He began with a stick of pure hard candy; white to symbolize the Virgin Birth and the sinless nature of Jesus; hard to symbolize the solid rock, the foundation of the Church; firmness to represent the promise of God.



The candy maker made the candy in the form of a “J” to represent the name of Jesus, who came to earth as our Saviour. He thought it could also represent the staff of the Good Shepherd, with which he reached down into the ditches of the world to lift out fallen lambs who, like all sheep, have gone astray.

Thinking that the candy was somewhat plain, the candy maker stained it with red stripes. He used three small stripes to show the stripes of the scourging Jesus received and the large red stripe to symbolize the blood shed by Christ on the cross.

TRINITY
Christmas
SERVICE TIMES

**Christmas Eve Service Sunday December 24th at
10:00am
(Sheila Anthony)**

**Christmas Eve Service Sunday December 24th at
5:30pm
(Sheila Anthony)**

The graphic features a blue background with a white starburst pattern. At the bottom, there is a silhouette of a church building. The text is centered and uses a mix of bold, sans-serif and elegant, cursive fonts.

Christmas Trivia

Submitted by Diane Revill

Who sent the first Christmas card?

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| A. Lawrence Auden | B. James Barker |
| B. C. Henry Cole | D. Franklin Dean |



Henry Cole. Henry Cole was the director of the Victoria and Albert museum in London and in 1843 he forgot to send out his usual Christmas letters so he designed a card with a Christmas wish and sent it to all his friends and started a trend. And now we think we don't have time to send Christmas cards.

Another story says the first commercial Christmas and New Year's card is believed to have been designed and printed in London England in 1843 by John Callcott Horsley who designed it at the request of his friend Sir Henry Cole. 1,000 cards were printed and sold in London for 1 shilling each.

Christmas Hamper Campaign 2023 *A Time to Show Love!*

Submitted by Session

Work is well underway for the 2023 Christmas Food Hamper Campaign!

This year, we will be providing hampers to 25 local families. Our Sharing Cupboard has become well-established in the community and well used over the last year. However, at this time of year, we felt the need to reach out to more families. The items from the Sharing Cupboard will be used to fill the hampers, with the Cupboard open for use again probably in early February 2024. Our hampers will also include a Food Gift Card and many perishables which we will get from Verona Foodland, our long time partners in this endeavour.



Delivery date is Thursday, December 14 (with December 15 as a snow date!). How can you help? Sign-up lists are at the back of the sanctuary for packers and delivery teams.

Your generous weekly contributions of non-perishables can certainly continue - we are so grateful for your support.

And one final note to let you know that what we do is a community effort - we have received an extremely generous monetary contribution towards the Hampers/Cupboard from the Verona Lions Club.

Living our faith, indeed!!!

Trinity United Church Proudly Presents

ON THE WAY TO BETHLEHEM

Join us in Verona for our annual evening of
carols and Christmas music with the
Trinity United Church Choir
& Friends

Special guests: The Frontenac Youth Choir

Friday December 8th, 2023 7:30pm

Trinity United Church
6689 Road 38 Verona

Admission by a
Food Bank Donation

A Christmas Message - in Story Form

Submitted by Ian Mackay

The story is told of Shah Abbas, a Persian monarch who loved his people very much. To know and understand them better, he would mingle with his subjects in various disguises. One day, he went as a poor man to the public baths and in a tiny cellar he sat beside the fireman who tended the furnace. When it was meal time, the monarch talked to his lonely subject and shared his coarse food as a friend. Again and again, he visited and the man grew to love him. One day the Shah told him he was the monarch, expecting the man to ask some gift from him. But the fireman sat gazing at his ruler with love and wonder and at last spoke, "You left your palace and your glory to sit with me in this dark place, to eat of my coarse food, to care whether my heart is glad or sorry. On others you may bestow rich presents, but to me you have given yourself, and it only remains for me to pray that you will never withdraw the gift of your friendship."



This good story reminds us that Christ, whose birthday we celebrate at Christmas, left the glories of heaven in order to share himself with us. That gift of his love and friendship will never be withdrawn from us. He has chosen to be our friend forever.

ROMANS 15:13

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in faith so that you overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

A Gaelic Blessing

By William Sharp 1895

Submitted by Beatrice Moffitt

Deep peace of the running wave to you
 Deep peace of the flowing air to you
 Deep peace of the quiet earth to you
 Deep peace of the shining stars to you
 Deep peace of the gentle night to you
 Moon and stars pour their healing light on you
 Deep peace of Christ the light of the world on you
 Amen



Buy Less Christmas Shopping Guide

Adapted with permission from UCC

Submitted by Sheila Anthony

The key to buying less at Christmas is to ask yourself what you have to offer the people you love. We often rely on presents to communicate who we are and how we feel about our family and friends, but how can you build closer connections with your loved ones?



A. Kids!

Anyone giving Christmas gifts to children wants that big WOW when the wrapping comes off. How about collecting your favourite books from when you were their age, either re-gifted or found at a second-hand shop? Assemble a kit that enables them to participate at home: a basket of baking gear, a toolbox, or a gardening kit.

B. Young Adults!

People in early adulthood are busy juggling school, work, relationships, and family. How about creating a care package of food you have made? Make a booklet of your favourite recipes and include ingredients.

C. Middle-agers!

People in middle age have a to-do list a mile long. Coming up with a gift requires thinking about what you're good at and what services you could offer. How about offering childminding, yard work, cleaning, repair, painting? Create a book of coupons for services your loved one could redeem at any time.

D. Retired people and seniors!

Folks of retirement age have every material thing they want or need. They recognize that true value rests in relationships and time spent together. How about going to a show, gallery, play, or music festival together?

Where Did Some of Our Most Beloved Christmas Carols Originate?

Adapted with permission from UCC

Submitted by Sheila Anthony



“O Little Town of Bethlehem”

In 1865, the famous preacher and abolitionist Phillip Brooks rode on horseback from Jerusalem to Bethlehem and participated in the Church of the Nativity’s Christmas Eve celebration. In response to his experience there, he wrote the now famous carol “O Little Town of Bethlehem,” which was first performed by the children’s choir of his church a few years later. Unlike many Christmas carols, the lyrics of this reflective and hopeful song are set in the present tense rather than the past.

“Good King Wenceslas”

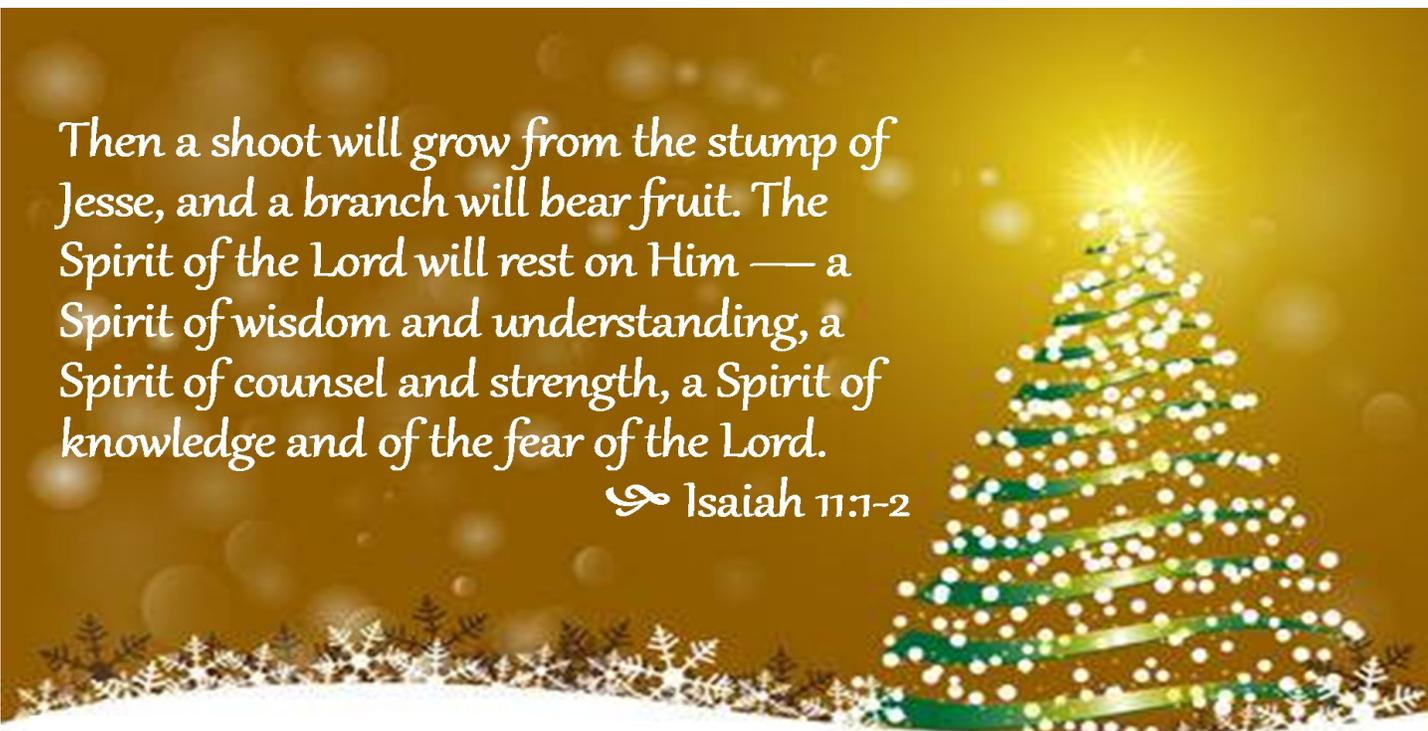
Though the tune is taken from a much older madrigal, John Mason Neale’s “Good King Wenceslas” (1853) is about a man who braves winter storms during Saint Stephen’s Day (December 26) to help his poorer neighbours. The story it tells is based on a real person - Wenceslas I, Duke of Bohemia, named the patron saint of the Czech Republic.

“Silent Night, Holy Night”

In 1816, Father Joseph Mohr wrote the poem “*Stille Nacht! Heilige Nacht!*”, while stationed at a pilgrim church in Austria. Two years later, now at St. Nicholas’ church in Oberndorf, he asked Franz Gruben to set the poem for guitar and choir, which the two performed on Christmas Eve of 1818.

Then a shoot will grow from the stump of Jesse, and a branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him — a Spirit of wisdom and understanding, a Spirit of counsel and strength, a Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.

✧ *Isaiah 11:1-2*



The Road Ahead

Submitted by Sheila Anthony

Trinity United Church is now under the supervision of Region 12 Pastoral Relations. Our contact person is Sharon McDonald from Sharbot Lake.

Our vacancy information has been sent to Region 12 and we hope to get approved on Tuesday November 28th.

Our search committee is also in place - Sheila Anthony, Diane Revill, Don Coleman, Ralph McInnes and Rachel Smith-Tryon.



12 Books of Christmas

Adapted with permission from UCC

Submitted by Sheila Anthony

Sharing stories together is an important Christian tradition. Through story, we can come closer to the mystery of Christmas and spend time with one another. Each day, read one story together as we move from Christmas to Epiphany.

Here are some suggestions:



“Amazing Peace: A Christmas Poem” by Maya Angelou

“Too Many Tamales” by Gary Soto

“Tree of Cranes” by Allen Say

“Who Built the Stable?” by Ashley Bryan

“The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomey” by Susan Wojciechowski

“Why I love Christmas” by Daniel Howarth

“Jesus’ Christmas Party” by Nicholas Allan

“When God Made Light” by Matthew Paul Turner and David Catrow

“The Last Straw” by Fredrick Thury and Vlasta Van Kamopen

“Three Wise Women” by Mary Hoffman

“The legend of Old Befana” by Tomie dePaola



Christmas Blessings
Reprinted from December 2022
Written by Rev. Catherine Oxenford-Grant
Submitted by Session



Do you have any idea why we put lights on Christmas trees and on our houses? They are lovely and because it is now close to winter (as displayed by our recent snowfall and the clocks falling back) the lights really make quite a difference. And they wouldn't be nearly as obvious in July!

The winter celebration with lights may have begun as a "lighten up the winter" ceremony for us, but for over 2,000 years, it's been a celebration of Christ's birth...and of course, we light the Christ Candle at the beginning of our worship services. It has been a celebration of Christ's birth, with evergreen trees to demonstrate hope and the lights to help us delight in the coming of Jesus, the Light of the World.

At this time of year, we need light. But there is also much happening in our world that needs light and love to bring healing and hope. Sometimes we notice this even in our families, our churches, our community, and our schools.

Do you have any light within you to share? Well, of course you do. Each of us in our own way adds light to a room and to this world. The Christmas tree wouldn't look nearly as beautiful with only one light and it certainly wouldn't glow. In just the same way, our community of faith wouldn't have as much hope or joy or brightness with just one person. Each of us, each of you is a light or has a light inside you. You may not think you have a lot of light, but we all know how even one small light can make a big difference.

Your generosity and initiatives like the Trinity Sharing Cupboard (spearheaded by Sheila Anthony) and our Road Ahead discussions - these are small lights that will one day and perhaps even now make a big difference to and within the community of Verona and our Trinity congregation.

Each of you, each of us have a light within...a spark of divinity, a glimmer of hope. Never underestimate the significance of the spark and the hope that is inside of you. This is the life God gave you. It matters what you do. You can make a much greater difference than you can possibly imagine. And when we all shine together? Well, it is just like the Christmas tree – beautiful!

May the star of wonder and the star of light with royal beauty bright, guide us all to the perfect light.

Blessings to you and yours this Advent and Christmas Season.