

Knox & St-Paul's Presbyterian Churches

The

CHRISTMAS 2020

PRESS-BYTERIAN

Newsletter



ADVENT
ISSUE

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From Your Pastor



**For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given;
And the government will be upon His shoulder.
And His name will be called Wonderful, Counsel-
lor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the increase of *His* government and peace *There will
be* no end,
Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom,
To order it and establish it with judgment and justice
From that time forward, even forever.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.
(Isaiah 9:6-7)**

Dear Friend

Advent and Christmas are a precious time for Christians. It is easy to get caught up in the busy-ness of the secular Christmas, and during ‘normal’ times, the church can be guilty of adding more and more to people’s schedules. This year is different.

COVID has changed so much. This year there are no Carol Candlelight Services, or Handel’s Messiah, or Sunday school pageants. We aren’t supposed to mix our households. We aren’t supposed to travel. So, we have a choice to make. We can either grieve what we’ve lost or celebrate what we have gained. What we’ve gained is time.

We have time to think about the Word of God becoming incarnate. We can allow ourselves the opportunity to read the Christmas narrative leisurely. We have the opportunity to telephone a family member or friend and indulge in a lengthy chat.

I have read that more people plan on sending Christmas cards this season. That makes sense to me. A beautiful card with a note inscribed goes a long way in relieving loneliness. Is there someone that you haven’t spoken to in a long time? The season of Advent is the perfect reason to ‘reach out and touch someone.’ Yes, I know I’m showing my age.

The four candles in the season of Advent are Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love; as we journey from hope, peace, joy, and end at love, why not take that time (which we have more of this year) and reflect on what gives us hope. Where do we need peace in our lives and our world? What gives us joy, and how can we make others joyful? And finally, what do we love, and how do we show that love?

Unless the restrictions are lifted there will be no in-person Christmas Eve worship. At 7:00 p.m. the Christmas Eve worship with musicians playing and singers singing and readers reading and candle lighters candle lighting will be put online for everyone to enjoy. Perhaps make a mug of hot chocolate and cosy up around the screen and sing the familiar carols and hear the birth narrative again for the first time.

It's Advent & Christmas. It is also the season of COVID. But COVID doesn't cancel Christmas. Our God is awesome, and his birth has been celebrated for more than two thousand years. Trials, persecution, and tribulations; will not prevent us from celebrating His Holy birth. Please join me this season by remembering our blessings and sharing them with others.

God bless,



Rev James

Church News



Knox Sunday school

We are very excited and looking forward to beginning this Fall using our brand-new online curriculum titled the "Big God Project," where the whole church learns the entire Bible together. The curriculum is designed to tell the whole story found in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, from Creation to the promise of Christ's return and a new Heaven and a new earth.

The Eastern Ontario Health Unit is not yet allowing churches to hold live Sunday school; so, we plan to send a link each week to our church Sunday school families via email, to access the video and activities related to that week's Bible story. The Big God Story (the Bible) teaches us who God is, why we were created, God's plan for creation, and how we can be in a relationship with our Creator to live the very best life. The Big God Story has a beginning, a middle, and an end. It starts at the very beginning of everything, and it ends in the future when God will restore all of creation forever.

Karin Mode

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THE BIBLE IS GOD'S STORY



Emma and Madison, granddaughters of Nancy Macdonald are shown here colouring in their 'BIG GOD' Project journals.

Thank you Nancy for these lovely photos and thank you Karin for this wonderful project.

Church News

Foster Child News

Thank you Lynda for having done this important work for quite a few years now.

Dear Ms. Lynda Heinsma,

Thank you for helping the world's children do the extraordinary! Throughout this challenging year your support has empowered vulnerable children to build a better future for themselves and their communities.

You've helped improve the lives of more than 900,000 children, youth and adults, including 17,000+ young women who received vocational training and access to savings and credit associations to start businesses. You've also advanced gender equality and the rights of women and children, encouraging teachers and community leaders to become advocates for change.

Now, as the year draws to a close, I hope you'll consider making a gift of \$100, \$200, \$300 or whatever you're able to give. When you donate by Dec. 31, you'll multiply your gift 10X in support of education, mentoring and employment opportunities for Nicaraguan youth, especially girls and young women — one of the greatest needs in communities hardest-hit by COVID-19.

Textile work is punishingly difficult. Women sewing clothes on shifts as long as 12 hours are restricted to two bathroom breaks a day and forbidden from drinking water. Pregnant women are often fired outright.

Due to the low social value of girls and women in many communities, some families marry off their adolescent daughters to much older men as a way to "get ahead." As a result, Nicaragua has one of the highest rates of child marriages and teen pregnancies in Latin America. Adolescent mothers are trapped in poverty with their sons and daughters.

What can be done? Your gift will give young women a chance to escape poverty and gain independence through initiatives supported by Children Believe, helping them secure formal employment or start their own businesses. Making it possible for girls and women to succeed and transform their lives is a vital part of empowering children, families and entire communities!

As this challenging year draws to a close, your gift to Children Believe will help a generation of women access new and life-changing opportunities through education. Please donate before midnight Dec. 31 to help girls and young women see the new year as one of hope.

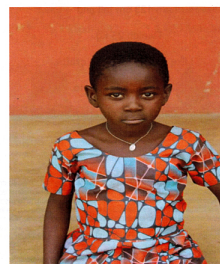


Sincerely,

Fred Witteveen, CEO
Children Believe

"Amaaraba!"

My name is Catherine.



Catherine Wejigidan Kuyiweyiga
(Achohia)

In some of Ghana's rural communities, we use the greeting "amaaraba" to say "welcome" to our friends.

Our foster child Rebecca's has moved away from the village where she was being supported so she is no longer part of the Children Believe Program (CCF Christain Children's Fund). In her place we have a new child whose name is Catherine. She also lives in Ghana and her family is Christian.

Update on Opportunity Knox

Opportunity Knox is a community initiative under the sponsorship of Knox Presbyterian Church. The group were instrumental in a Syrian refugee family and Syrian refugee being brought in Canada from intolerable conditions in refugee camps. They have since moved and are settling into life in Canada. The following is an update by Karin Mode (a member of the Opportunity Knox committee) and photos provided by Lisa Jennings. Many thanks to Karin and Lisa and all the work Opportunity Knox has done to bring some relief to those who were living in appalling conditions.

Shortly after Samih left Vankleek Hill and arrived in British Columbia, he started work at More Than a Roof (<https://morethanaroof.org>), a Christian social housing organization that provides housing for marginalized or challenged individuals. It was a 3 month full time position which took him up to September. Samih was loved and respected by the tenants and his team-mates. His boss indicated that the organization would like to train him up for a more senior role. However, Samih had his heart set on attending Regent College and entering into the Master of Divinity program. Samih applied and was successful in obtaining funds covering half of his tuition. He also received a scholarship at the time of receiving his letter of acceptance. He now has his entire tuition for the duration of his Master of Divinity covered.

Samih feels it is a tremendous blessing and a further confirmation that God is directing his steps. He is also very grateful for the incredible prayer support in Vankleek Hill and for the love he felt shared from the community.

Katherine is working on her doctoral dissertation. It is a slow but steady progress. They both send their love from the West coast.

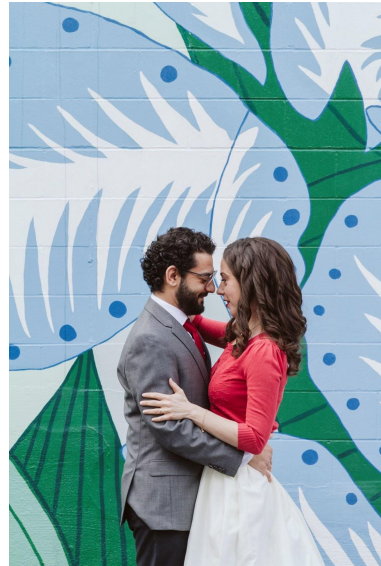
The Hamis family have moved to Quebec city where they have settled into their new home. Mamoud has a cousin there. Ilyaza and William are both well.

Thank you Karin.

Photos on the next page

Update on Opportunity Knox

Congratulations to Samih and Katherine on their marriage, October 12th. Our prayers and best wishes go out to them. May God bless their marriage with His love.



The Worst of Times—The Best of Times

The opening phrase of Dickens's book 'A Tale of Two Cities' could describe the promise of Christmas 2020. This will be the first time in a long time that we will not be attending a Christmas Eve service. James' message on page 2 sums it up beautifully - Christmas is definitely coming whether we choose it or not. Christmas Eve year zero came without any human intervention (maybe with a bit of help from Mary!).

As Jim sings with his banjo in 'Old Church Choir' "Ain't nobody gonna steal my Joy". Our Christmas Eve Service will be pre-recorded for the first time ever. This issue's front page photo of the music team was taken as we prepared for the first Advent Sunday service. This is the 'best of times' part — "change is sometimes good Donkey" Why? When things become automatic or routine they tend to lose impact. There is nothing like social gathering after a period of separation—ask anyone who has left their families to move far away.

There are people in the congregation determined that Jesus will be worshiped, that God's Word will be spoken - and the difference is, its available to everyone (with a computer—that works!) and the words do not just dissipate into the ether in the sanctuary - they linger in the 'cloud' for months. Those with beautiful voices use them in the sanctuary and on-line every week. Mary and Janis are there to greet those who are able to attend and clean their hands before the souls are cleansed. Ushers will find safe seats and Karin will register attendance. With Ben working the sound; Robin recording video; its Rev James who still delivers the message. I am so thankful for the voices and instrument talents of Nathalie and Elita, Jim, Mike and Guy - they sometimes give me Goosebumps they sound so good. Thank you also to Angela for sanctuary decoration see photos next page. Thank you everyone..



Mary Fraser and Janis Renwick deserve special Thanks for faithfully greeting us at the bottom of the ramp each Sunday—complete with welcoming smiles, masks and hand sanitizers. Thank You Ladies.



Thank you to Angela Dainty for beautifying the sanctuary also to Shirley who has donated flowers.



Sadly, Mrs Phyllis Steele, the mother of Karin Mode, passed away on 16th September. A dear friend to many at Knox and St Paul's churches.

So many were blessed by Phyllis, her lovely smile and her joy for life. She will be sadly missed at the Heritage, her home church Cassburn United and by all who knew her.



Also sad news from St Paul's. Dorothy Cameron an elder for 43 years at St Paul's passed away earlier this year Dorothy was 97. She was well loved and respected by all. She will be missed.

Dorothy was well respected in her community and led a life of community service.

Mary's Song Luke 1: 46 to 55

*My soul glorifies the Lord
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
For He has been mindful of the humble state of His servant.
From now on all generations will call me blessed,
For the Mighty One has done great things for me -
Holy is His Name.
His mercy extends to those who fear Him,
From generation to generation.
He has performed mighty deeds with His arm;
He has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.
He has brought down rulers from their thrones
But has lifted the humble.
He has filled the hungry with good things
But has sent the rich away empty.
He has helped His servant Israel, remembering to be merciful
to Abraham and his descendants forever,
even as He said to our fathers.*

Wishing our Knox/St Paul's Church families - Peace to your home and Joy to your heart this Christmas season. We pray you have a (Covid 19 safe) very Merry Christmas and a safe, healthy and happy New Year. May 2021 bring back our old normal of gathering with family and friends safely.

God Bless, Mary and Don Fraser

We also wish peace in your hearts this Christmas and throughout the coming year. Keep well everyone . **Christine and David Morris**

An Unforgettable Christmas - by Dave Morris

It was in 2006. I experienced a very special Christmas. I owe my good friend Doug Richardson a debt of gratitude for introducing me to a group of people I would never have thought to associate with. Doug and I were members of a Church in Quebec.

Doug had set an evangelic mission for himself which was to target those with mental issues. The reason being, and he made no bones about it, he himself had suffered severe depression which was now under control. Having been in a psychiatric hospital, he understood the problems that the mentally handicapped face every day.

In Regaud there is a building that was owned by nuns that was rented to a very loving Christian lady, Liette, an ex girls' school principal who, like Doug, had a passion for caring for the mentally impaired. The building could house about 50 people complete with dorms, meeting rooms and dining rooms. Liette and her husband undertook to house 25 or 30 men and women who had mental issues and had been released from hospital but had nowhere to go. In many of the cases their families had abandoned them.

Doug was also very enthusiastic about the Alpha course and had organised several Alpha sessions at the Church. He suggested to Session that we set up an Alpha Course for the people at the Regaud house and had agreement from Liette to run it there. Doug was willing to take this on by himself— but had just one request. He had heard me play the violin at a concert we had put on and asked if I would join him to provide music. How could I refuse? although every bone in my body wanted me to.

Every Tuesday we were invited to lunch at the 'Home' which was followed by violin music and then Alpha. I will never forget the first meeting. I was there with fear and trepidation. We were sat down for lunch—deathly silence, no eye contact, eyes darting back and forth suspiciously. Questions answered with grunts. These people had issues ranging from severe depression, bi-polar, schizophrenia—you name it. Doug started chatting away getting very little response. Then came music time. What should I play? No answer! Finally, Liette said, "Can you play Amazing Grace?" I hadn't gone through more than half a dozen bars when about half of them broke into tears. I was dumbfounded—I stopped, but Liette said, "Don't stop, keep playing". I came to realise that these people were hurting badly and all emotions were just below the surface—which came to be expressed as soon as they heard the music.

When I had finished, everyone seemed to be a bit more alive. I asked for other requests, one guy looked up and asked, "Do you know 'Medicinal Compound?', I answered, "You mean Lilly the Pink?" - "Yes, Irish Rovers". So they got Lilly the Pink—which he asked for every week at the Alpha course. As the months went by, we got closer to them such that I came to love these people—an ex- professor in philosophy from McGill, a student studying micro-biology for his PhD — which he will never finish although he said he was going to because every night he talks to God, Esther (smart lady he said) and sometimes Mohammad. My favourite was Ron, an ex-Montreal panhandler, he used to come out with some zingers.

At Christmas, we thought it would be nice to give them a Christmas concert. So I asked the choir if they would join us, they were all over it! Also, the Bible study group. Suddenly, the power of "Organising women" was realised once again. We arranged for presents of warm blankets, woolly socks and goodies—they liked to be wrapped up in the

evenings when watching TV. Liette put on a Turkey supper, after which everyone sang Christmas Carols to violin and keyboard. They all had a parcel under the Christmas tree with their name on it, which were distributed by Santa's helpers. I'm not sure who gained the most out the experience, the men and women from the home or the group from the Church, but everybody felt good. My panhandler friend Ron proposed to Christine that night, but she had to decline because she was already taken.

Unfortunately, the mission came to an end. Liette passed away suddenly, and because they didn't get the level of supervision Liette had given them, one of the guys, who I had thought was saner than many people I know, decided to visit the local tavern, got a small whiff of marijuana and went crazy trying to destroy the place. They had to persuade the police to let him out of jail. A group of Regaud citizens got up a petition to have the Home disbanded. The guys were split up, they went to several places in the West Island with no meeting places, so it was never the same again. Many have since passed away, I have met two or three when attending a Christian's men's breakfast in Pointe Claire.

It seems a shame that it no longer exists, but there, for a little while, perhaps a touch of heaven was brought to a small group of people and a little more understanding of the message of Christmas for all who participated.

As Rev. James mentions in his letter, Christmas will be very different this year, hopefully unique. We have seen epidemics before, but this pandemic is very different - by sacrificing our Christmas Eve worship service in person we are demonstrating a special love.

Whereas we are taking every precaution within our service procedures which reduces the risk of contagion, we spare those who are most vulnerable to the worst consequences of the infection. At the same time we reduce risk to our own health. But as doctors tell us, no precaution is guaranteed to be 100% effective. At least we can demonstrate our sincere concern for others and respect for those in authority by complying with responsible action.

Spare a thought and a prayer for the 10's of thousands across the country and millions across the world who have suffered the effects of COVID-19.

The following poem was given to me many years ago by a colleague at work, who was an evangelistic Christian who turned out to be quite influential in my spiritual development.

*I asked God for strength, that I might achieve,
I was made weak, that I might learn humbly to obey.*

*I asked for health, that I might do greater things,
I was given infirmity, that I might do better things.*

*I asked for riches, that I might be happy,
I was given poverty, that I might be wise.*

*I asked for power, that I might have the praise of men,
I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God.*

*I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life,
I was given life, that I might enjoy all things.*

*I got nothing that I asked for, but everything I had hoped for.
Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered.*

I am, among all men, the most richly blessed.

Author unknown.

I pray God's blessings on you all. —David Morris