

ADVENT NEWSLETTER

CHRISTMAS ADVENT NEWSLETTER
OF ST. ANDREW'S UNITED CHURCH



St. Andrew's United Church

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FINDING GOD IN DARKNESS

We are about to begin our second COVID Advent. It's been the better part of two years that we have been struggling with this pandemic, and though we've actually managed pretty well, we're still tired. We're worn down by the constant shifting and changing, and by the pressure of anxiety and stress. Not to mention, the weight of tragedy that has struck some of us during this time, when we are less able to do what we need to heal and be comforted. As the days grow shorter and as COVID hangs on, it feels...dark.

*Stand still. The trees ahead and the bushes beside you
Are not lost.*

*Wherever you are is called Here,
And you must treat it as a powerful stranger,
Must ask permission to know it and be known.*

David Wagoner

In a religious or spiritual sense, we often think of light as good and darkness as bad. If we don't understand, if our minds are "dark," that's bad - we're **supposed to** understand, we're **supposed to** always be faithful. If we can't see the way before us, that's bad - we're **supposed to** know our way. If we're depressed, worn out, sad, angry, afraid, that's bad - we're **supposed to** always be well and upbeat. (Continued on page 2...)

Finding God In Darkness continued...

Except that maybe we're NOT supposed to be always sunny and bright. After all, God created every 24 hours with times of both darkness and light.

*"Day to day pours forth speech,
And night to night declares
knowledge."*

Psalm 19

This Advent, we are inviting you to come into the dark. As the world around us darkens, as the days grow shorter and the nights longer, we are inviting you to experience "dark spirituality." No, not like the "Dark Side" in Star Wars! This is not a matter of flirting with evil, but rather exploring the parts of Christian spirituality that specialize in hope, in mystery, in depth, in honesty, and in trust. In the dark we can see the stars, and learn the art of navigation. In the dark we are restored by sleep, and can be guided by dreams. In times of struggle we become stronger, deeper. And in the dark, when we no longer think we understand, then it may be that God can come even nearer than breathing...

At first, in the dark, we can see nothing. But stop, be still, wait - and as our eyes become accustomed to less light the beauty of the darkness will begin to show itself.

Come with us this Advent to learn (or renew) some of our faith's "night practices." Come with us to find God in the dark.



White Gift Sunday

December: 5th-8th



Santa's Anonymous:

Unwrapped gifts for ages up to 16
*Especially pre-teen/teen items such as sports balls (basketball), hoodies and gift cards (ex. local cinema)

Lacombe Food Bank:

Regular non-perishable food items, toilet paper, laundry & hand soap

Optional Drop Off Dates/Times:

Sunday Service December 5th

**Mon-Wed December 6-8th, 9:30-11:30
at the church.**

Lift Someone Into the Light



Thursday, November 25: 6:30-8:00PM

As the skies darken and the days shorten, coming into our second COVID Christmas, we're all probably at least a little tired and cranky. However, we also know that this time of struggle has brought the best out in some of us. There may be someone who has actually saved your life during this pandemic or, they have restored your sense of humor or gone the extra mile to give you support just when it was needed. Who would you like to highlight? Someone you would like to thank? Would you like to say sorry to someone, or just declare your love for someone?

This season we are inviting you to remember, and celebrate, these special people in your life.

On November 25, during the Light Up The Night Festival, come by the Christmas tree at the front of St. Andrew's United Church (we'll have free hot chocolate!). Put a picture, a word or two of your story, or their name, into an ornament and hang it on the tree (everything needed will be supplied). Lift them into the light.

Let's share some good news for a change. Let's raise our spirits by looking at the best side of us. **Lift Someone Into The Light!**



Advent 1

Sunday, November 28: 10:30 AM

Sunday Worship: Happy New Year! The first Sunday of Advent marks the beginning of the new church (liturgical) calendar. This Sunday (the Sunday of **hope**) we'll be looking at Luke 1:26-38, the Annunciation story. What Gabriel announced to Mary is pretty far fetched - that she, a young unmarried woman, in a small town in an occupied territory, should become mother to a King! And yet even though she had no idea how that would all come to pass, she was willing. Willing to be used, willing to be led, willing to be a part of God's plan. Our practice for the week: **being willing**. Usually we'd like to be in control of our lives and destiny, which seems fine in the light. But in the dark, perhaps it's better if we're willing to be led by Someone who can see better than we can.



Covenanting Ceremony

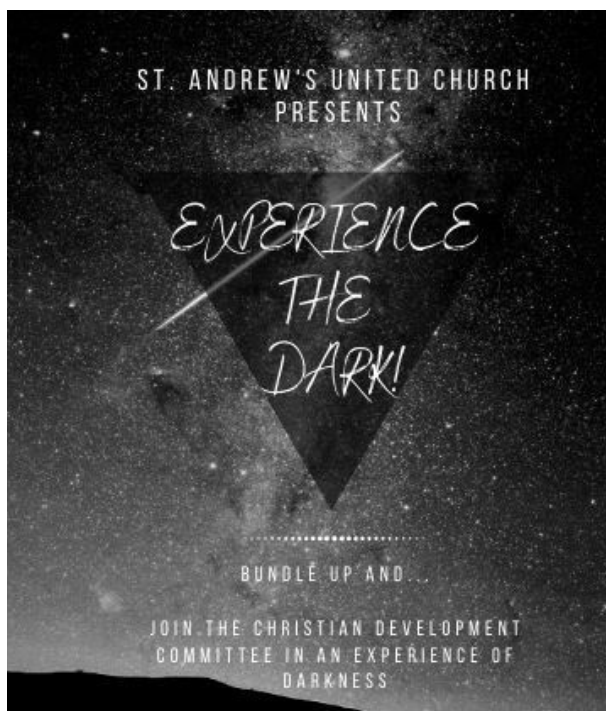
Sunday, November 28: 3:00 PM
COVID protocols require pre-registration, please inform the office if you plan on attending office@lacombeunitedchurch.ca 403-782-3148

Dave's been here a while, as the new minister, but today we will celebrate the covenant between Dave (and our staff team), the congregation, and the Chinook Winds Region of the United Church. We are a covenant people, living into promises of ministry care, and service to one another. What better time to celebrate our covenant than New Year's Day?

Experience The Dark

Friday, December 3: 7:00 PM

Join the Christian Development committee in an experience of darkness. Bundle up, we'll be outside!



Experience The Dark Location

Dennis & Linda Hueppelsheuser's Farm, 39404-RR 281. Travel west on highway 12 to the corner of Woodynook Road (towards Cull Lake). Turn south (left) on Woodynook Road and drive for about 6 miles until you reach a blinking red light, turn right into Hueppelsheuser's place just before the light (the mailbox with an airplane). You'll find ample parking in front of the house.

Please dress for the outdoors and be prepared for a 5-minute walk. We hope everyone can be there by 7 PM, for we want to start together. Please call Barbara @ [403-318-4000](tel:403-318-4000) with any questions you may have.

Advent 2

Sunday, December 5: 10:30 AM

Sunday Worship: This Sunday, the Sunday of **peace**, we'll look at Psalm 46. That's the Psalm that contains the line, "Be still, and know that I am God." Have you ever been lost? If you have, you may remember the sense of panic that sometimes rises, and the temptation is to run, move, scramble to try to find a familiar place. But actually, the opposite is often the wise course. Stop, be still, and in calmness the way out may come clear. Or at least, we won't get ourselves more lost by moving, and we'll be more easily found! Our practice for this week is a foundation of spirituality in many traditions: **meditation**. We'll teach one of the ways to "Be still, and know that I am God..." This is also a key way to experience God, even in the midst of doubts and intellectual "darkness."



Fill A Fridge

The Worship Committee has teamed up with FCSS in an exciting fundraising program to Fill a Fridge! The Fill a Fridge Program enables eligible families to purchase groceries of their choice this Christmas season. Last Christmas season 590 local individuals accessed the Fill a Fridge Program. Worship will set up a fridge in the sanctuary and place an ornament on it each time someone donates. Please consider donating this season as FCSS has stated this is a very high need this Christmas in Lacombe. Donation envelopes will be available at both entry doors of the church as well as the church office. **Please add your name and address to your envelope and FCSS will mail out a tax receipt in January.**

Day of Remembrance

Sunday, December 5: 2:00-5:00 PM

The Lacombe Palliative Care Society is hosting a Day of Remembrance, Sunday December 5th, as a come and go event at the LMC Memorial Park between 2-5 PM.

The purpose is to honor the memory of a loved one who has passed away. Drop in individually or as a group and receive a memory candle and poem. Hot chocolate and cookies will be served. For more information contact Diane at [403-782-4554](tel:403-782-4554).

Rotary Carol Festival

Tuesday, December 7: 6:30-8:30 PM

Lest We Forget Park - LMC

Come listen and sing along with local church carolers! Special guest singers, Flashback Freddie and Randi Boulton. Cookies and hot chocolate will be available. Donations for the Lacombe Food Bank and Santa's Anonymous will be accepted.

Write For Rights

Friday, December 10: 2:00-5:00 PM

Once again we are joining Amnesty International and its members around the world to Write for Rights. The 1948 UN International Declaration of Human Rights is still not followed in many countries and so we write to stand with those who are being wrongfully accused, incarcerated, threatened and killed. We will host this event Dec. 10, 2-5 PM in the church parlor. We will be physically distanced and follow the Covid protocols. If anyone wants to write from home we can give you the information you would like. Please call the church or Winnie at [403-348-9777](tel:403-348-9777) to let us know if you are planning on coming.

Advent 3

Sunday, December 12: 10:30 AM

Sunday Worship: This Sunday, the Sunday of **joy**, we'll look at Genesis 28: 10-17. This is the story of "Jacob's Ladder," the time when Jacob, fleeing from the wrath of his brother, stopped for the night at a holy place, without knowing it, and encountered God in a dream. The story behind this story is interesting. What Jacob stole from his brother was a blessing, the blessing of their father Isaac. But what both brothers learned through their lives is that they each had their own blessing, and that God was with them both. In the end, Jacob restored to his brother Esau the blessing he supposedly stole, recognizing that God's blessing is deeper than anything that can be taken away. Our practice this week is **blessing** - offering the no - strings - attached goodwill of God to another (and recognizing it in ourselves), even in times that seem hard. It's funny: you'd think it was being blessed that would bring joy, but as Jacob found out, it's actually offering blessing that often creates more joy in us.

Advent Team Requests Volunteers



We are looking for volunteers to participate in advent candle lighting by answering one of the following questions in a short video (one or two sentences) and then lighting the advent candle (this can be in the church or at home, with traditional candles or a tea light):

- How does your experience of God bring you hope in this season of pandemic?
- How does your experience of God bring you peace in this season of pandemic?
- How does your experience of God bring you joy in this season of pandemic?
- Where do you find the love of God in this season of pandemic?
- How does the birth of Christ bring light into your life?

Arrangements can be made to have someone video for you and candles can be provided if desired.

Weekly Advent Themes:

- **Hope:** Sunday November 28
- **Peace:** Sunday December 5
- **Joy:** Sunday December 12
- **Love:** Sunday December 19
- **Birth:** Friday December 24

If you are interested in participating, please contact Annerie Dunnewind at anneriedunnewind@hotmail.com 403-302-0846 for more details.

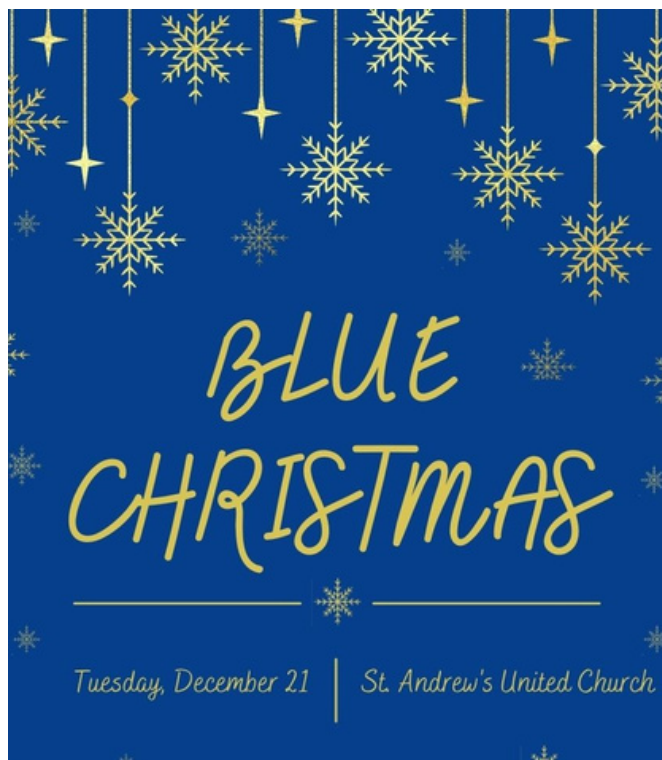


Advent 4

Sunday, December 19: 10:30 AM

Sunday Worship: We're getting close to Christmas now! This Sunday, the Sunday of **love**, we'll be looking at Luke 1:46-55, the passage known as the Magnificat. It's actually a controversial passage, about the reversal of fortune that Jesus often talked about - the last becoming first, and the first last. That may sound threatening, at first - especially for people like most of us, who are relatively prosperous. The rich sent away empty? That sounds bad. And yet...a little bit of "empty" for those of us whose lives are over-full may be just what the doctor ordered. This Sunday we'll try to lift our perspective to consider the common good. What may seem challenging at first may turn out to be the best for all of us! Our practice this week: **seeking the common good**, or, in a word, living in love. Sometimes, in the dark, we may feel lonely and isolated. But once again, we may discover that what makes us most alive and what banishes loneliness is not the receiving of love, but the giving.





Blue Christmas

Tuesday, December 21: 7:00 PM

Tonight is the longest night of the year, and it's often when we celebrate "Blue Christmas." We know that Christmas is not merry for all of us, all the time - and this year, depending on our ability to gather as families, it may be harder still. So this night we recognize that Christmas can be hard for many reasons -grief, family strife, unemployment, COVID, illness... Still: Jesus was born to poor parents, in a stable, in an occupied territory. If Christmas is hard, Jesus was born exactly for us.

MERRY
Christmas



Christmas Eve Candlelight Services at St. Andrew's United Church & Online

Youtube Livestream

Friday, December 24

This is the celebration of the birth of Christ, the incarnation of God - God with us. If there is anything that we have been trying to express all through Advent, it is that God remains with us, profoundly, lovingly, even in the midst of what we think of as darkness. So tonight we celebrate the light that shines in the darkness, and which no darkness can overcome.

Messy Church

December 24: 5:00 PM

Family Service

With Lift Someone Into The Light
December 24: 7:00 PM

***Due to past attendance at the 7:00 PM service, pre-registration will be required in order to follow COVID protocols. Please inform the office if you plan on attending the 7:00 PM service.

office@lacombeunitedchurch.ca
403-782-3148

Evening Service

December 24: 10:00 PM

