

ADVENT NEWSLETTER

A MESSAGE FROM REV. PAMELA

SURELY GOD IS MY SALVATION; I WILL TRUST, AND WILL NOT BE AFRAID, FOR GOD IS MY STRENGTH AND MY MIGHT; GOD HAS BECOME MY SALVATION. WITH JOY YOU WILL DRAW WATER FROM THE WELLS OF SALVATION. (ISAIAH12:2,3)

Advent is one of my most favorite seasons of the Christian year. Since being among you at Gower it has taken on a greater significance with planning and preparing music and liturgy for the advent and Christmas season with the worship team. I also look forward to our spectacular sanctuary decked in its absolute Christmas finest.

What does advent bring to us a faith filled community?

Advent always brims with promise and hope. The long-expected Holy One is drawing near, bringing peace and righteousness.

Advent promises a great reversal as well as the promise of all things new! It is foretold that the natural order of things will be overturned. The lion will dwell with the lamb. The desert will blossom and bloom. And there will be great joy!

There is a joyous advent hymn that refers to this text from Isaiah, "With Joy Draw Water."

It begins this way:

With joy draw water from the spring; salvation's living well. The Holy One is in your midst; glad praises sing and tell."

Drawing water from the wells of salvation is such a lovely image. It is powerful! It is especially a great Advent image filled with promise and hope! What will that living water do for us? What thirsts will it quench? What wounds will it heal? How will the advent journey for each of us individually and collectively as a community of faith make real these hope-filled images?

In our holy imagination, especially in Advent, we watch and wait. We pray and hope for God's great promised reversal. We hunger and thirst for righteousness. We look and long for justice, love, peace and joy to flourish as those wild myrtle bushes in the driest of deserts. In our time of pandemic these hopes and dreams are especially pertinent and true.

Today our world is broken and lost, but someday..... someday, in God's own time, God will lead us to the wells of salvation, and there we will draw water and we, and our world, will be healed.

No matter your circumstance this Advent season please know that You matter.

Know that God cares for you and walks with you through your joys and sorrows, through sickness and health. The journey is not yours to walk alone. May you feel God's presence in your midst.

May you and your loved ones have the most blessed Christmas, overflowing with love and the power of God's grace. May the peace that surpasses all understanding and the love that knows no bounds, be born to you again in the simple, yet miraculous birth of a baby who message continues to change individual lives and in turn the world.

With much love and blessings,
Rev. Pamela

PRAYER TO SHARE:
SURELY, YOU, O
GOD, ARE OUR SALVATION.
HELP US TO TRUST
YOU AND NOT BE AFRAID,
AS WE LOOK AHEAD
TO YOUR COMING AMONG US.
AMEN.

A MESSAGE FROM REV. ETTIE

Hello Friends,
Here we are (again) on the cusp of a new church year – praise God! Who could have imagined all that has happened since we began our Advent journey one year ago (Sunday, December 1, 2019).

I keep files for various activities I'm involved in throughout the year. Around March 14, 2020, in keeping with Public Health directives, our leadership team decided (in the name of safety) to stop services and all that it implied at Gower Street United until the end of March, 2020. I looked at my file folders, just starting to take on some shape, and mused "it doesn't look like there will be much in them for 2020."

Having just come through a frightful winter – a winter popularly referred to as "Snowmageddon" and now the threat of coronavirus things looked pretty bleak with regard to doing things as usual. Looking ahead into the uncertainty of life with COVID-19 we strived to maintain relationships in all aspects of life as we became part of the slowly evolving 'new normal.'

Now, as I look back on the past eleven months and scan the thickness of my files I can see a lot has happened. We as the church have not stood still. We, members of the Pastoral Care Committee, like the wider church, have also found meaningful ways to stay connected and be a pastoral presence in time of pandemic.

Together; congregants, members of the wider community (such as medical staff at various institutions) made it easier for pastoral care providers and

recipients of pastoral/spiritual care to connect even during lockdown.

Collaborative efforts seemed to abound during this time – from institutions as well as within our church family.

Unwavering faith, resourcefulness, the resilience of the human spirit, our community at large, and the commitment of our community of faith to its vision (as heralds of God's vision for Creation) have seen us through thus far.

While the pastoral relationship is grounded in being there – in the moment and in many moments the Committee soon discovered that with a little getting used to, the mutuality of being present, can be effective with the use of available technology: telephone, email, e-cards, snail mail, blogs, weekly prayer times (together while apart), and iPods. Once the initial adjustment to the notion that technology can be used in this way, visits became more significant as the intimacy of each interaction grew in accordance with the comfort level of participants.

All in all it has been a wonderful blessing – a new and eye-opening experience especially for one who is not very technologically savvy.

Now, here we are again! Preparing our hearts and waiting for the blessing of the coming of Emmanuel... As we ready our homes and ready our hearts we know this year things will be different.

Public health directives invite us to do things with safety in mind for ourselves, those we love, and our neighbours.

It is on this backdrop that I bring greetings on behalf of myself and the Pastoral Care Committee.

One of my favourite feelings around Advent and Christmas is captured in the line "the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight" from the hymn 'O Little Town of Bethlehem.' The tension of that line – the intersection of hope and fear sets up an inherent mood of stillness before the world grasps what has taken place and moves on to everyday business as usual. In that daunting sense of calm there is peace and possibility.

My prayer for you as we approach a new beginning place is: May you know in your being the sense of calm and stillness of the Holy Night; may you be blessed with that sense of perfect peace – even for a fleeting moment.

...and may the Christmas blessings of Peace, Hope, Love, and Joy live in your heart the whole year through.

Peace health love,

Rev. Ettie

Minister of Pastoral Care



A MESSAGE FROM REBECCA

I look forward to the time every year when my house transforms from the normal into a Christmas wonderland. It has always been a magical time of year for me! When I was little, both my parents worked, so the entire house's decorating would take place over a few days or even a week or two. It was a slow and detailed process that my mom was (and is) the master. It wasn't just decorating the house. It was the smells and tastes as my Nan prepared all the yummy Christmas treats over the weeks in December. Each day my sister and I would come home, we would get to embrace another little gift of reparation. As I think back to over the memories I have of Christmas preparations, I now see what a gift this process my family moved through was.

Reflecting on how we prepare for Christmas as a family has led me to a new appreciation for Advent's season. This season of preparing and waiting. Now I know that my parents were not thinking of an advent lesson all the years growing up. It was merely the fact that with work schedules, the thing had to be done in pieces. Here is the thing though, in each of those pieces, the excitement would build. What will we do today? How will we be getting ready as a family tonight? It was a time of bonding and a time filled with the Spirit. It was where traditions were birthed, and our home filled with love.

As I moved into adulthood, a little of this preparation has changed. While I understand this is important, I am looking forward to the Christmas prep and feeling that Spirit in preparing and waiting.

In this season of waiting and preparing, I feel a connection to God and all my communities. There is a wonder to this season that I cannot explain, but it brings forth love, peace, joy and hope in the connections we make and the people we connect with.

At Christmas, we often hear about the wonder and excitement for children in the season. I get to witness this wonder, my niece and nephew. It is uniquely beautiful, but there is also beauty in the awe of my family surrounding them. It is in this season that we can find pause to enjoy time and connection.

I had the honour of helping my niece decorate her house a few weekends ago, the wonder on her face as we got everything unboxed was beautiful. It was more, though, I found myself, and her mother also got to join in that wonder with her as we recalled our family memories and traditions. Their home was filled with laughter, love, memories, joy and hope for what is to come. In this season, I hope that all of you have times to feel this Spirit in this way, in connections with those you love.

The season of Advent is a time of recalling and remembering as we prepare to embrace what is to come. This year has been full of many unexpected events and changes that have shifted how we live and are in the community. Our world has significantly changed this year, and many are eager for this year to be over, but the faces of little children and their parents can remind us that this is not a time to rush. Advent is a time to embrace waiting and all the connections it brings.



To offer thanks for what has happened and open our arms for the arrival of Christ gain.

So as I reflect on this year, I feel grateful for how Gower's community has supported and stayed connected. For the families of Gower who embrace new ideas, who offer each other support and care. For youth and young people who seek to share with this community who they are and what they love. For the welcoming arms that, even with physical distancing, are wrapped around each community member as they wait and prepare.

I hope that this season of Advent, you pause to recall your year, to look around at your life for the wonder and embrace the gift of waiting and preparing. Let us strive not to rush through to-do lists. Let us make them a sacred act. Take time to be intentional and be in relationship, even if this year our gatherings are smaller or digital. Let us prepare our hearts for Christ's birth by being in connection with those who fill us with peace, love, hope and joy.

Christmas blessings,

Rebecca

Minister of Children, Youth & Young Families

OUR CHORAL SCHOLARS

During the past several years, Gower has been fortunate to have the services of singers from the MUN School of Music to provide musical leadership in the Senior Choir. Originally, funding for this group was provided by a one-time-grant from the Bruneau Centre for Choral Excellence which encouraged the creation of new groups to sing choral music in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Around that time, Carl Stevenson and his family undertook to make the choral bursary a permanent addition to worship at Gower in memory of his wife, Wendy. Carl's donations from his frequent art shows have been generously subsidized by donations from members of our congregation in memory of loved ones.

Sadly, Carl's passing in 2019 has caused us to re-examine the program. After consulting with the Stevenson family, we are re-dedicating this facet of our service music by re-naming it for both Carl and Wendy Stevenson.

We have been blessed with wonderful work by several students, who regularly provide leadership within the choir. This past year, their role had been drastically enlarged and the quartet has actually become the choir. Reaction from the congregation has been very positive, indeed. We take this opportunity to publicly present the folk who have been helping us to lead in worship, particularly in the last couple of years. We are pleased that they have chosen to share some of their history and experience with you.



AIDAN SACCARY:
Aidan Saccary holds a Bachelor of Music (Honours) in Clarinet performance from Memorial University and currently works as Executive Assistant with the world-renowned Shallaway Youth Choir. Aidan sings with numerous choirs throughout the city and is an army reservist with the Royal Newfoundland Regiment Band. He has performed at Buckingham Palace, Windsor Castle, Parliament Hill, Rideau Hall, the Royal Nova Scotia International Tattoo, and throughout Newfoundland.

MARIGOLD BENOIT:
Originally from Stephenville on the beautiful west coast of Newfoundland, Marigold has been singing at Gower since September of 2019. She graduated in May with a Bachelor of Music in Voice and is now pursuing a Bachelor of Music Education! In her spare time, she likes to go hiking and teach at Halliday Music Studio. Marigold is so happy to be back at Gower finally!



GRACE ROSE:
Since joining the Gower St. Choir, I have finished my Bachelor's of Music in Voice and have just begun the Music Education program at MUN! I have been working with music groups that support musical experiences for neurodiverse individuals, and music therapy has become a passion of mine! I am so happy to be singing at Gower again this year.



OUR CHORAL SCHOLARS



BRANDON MOLLON:

Things for me have been quite busy these last few months. I worked during the summer overseeing the writing of new military documents for music instruction in the Canadian Cadet Organization. This concluded at the end of August, and I am now completing my internship in Sydney, NS, for the last portion of my Bachelor of Music Education. Besides that, I am still keeping busy with ensembles and choirs online and have recently been asked to sit on the NED Barbershop Board of Directors and the VP of Music. As for where I am going, I hope that all goes well in my internship and that I will then be a full-time teacher in the Cape Breton Victoria Regional Centre for Education.

DUNCAN STENHOUSE:

Duncan is doing very well. He has settled into life in London and is loving it! He is staying in a place called Goodenough College that is accommodations for Masters and Doctorate students, exclusively for International students. The people staying there are from all nationalities And all disciplines. Goodenough College puts off an opera each year, and Duncan has been asked to reprise his role as Sarastro in their production of The Magic Flute in the Spring. Duncan's studies at the Royal Academy of Music are also off to a great start. He has already begun intensive rehearsals for Benjamin Britten's, A Midsummer Night's Dream, in which he has been cast as Bottom and is doing very well with it. This performance will be live-streamed in November without an audience, due to COVID-19 restrictions. Both his Voice prof and the Head of Opera say that they do not doubt that he will one day be singing the part of Wotan in Wagner's, The Ring! Duncan is taking Italian and French classes, German Lied, French Art Song, Oratorio, Drama and Movement classes (where he learns how to sword fight and waltz!), Master Class, Opera, and his Voice lessons. He has also been accepted into the Composition program. On top of all this, he meets with his tutor/advisor about his dissertation on Composing for the voice every week! Although he is super busy, Duncan has managed to build friendships with the other 17 voice students in his year. Some are British, and some are Russian, French, Korean, American and one other Canadian student in his year. Needless to say, they have already had a few pub visits together, and there will likely be many more to come in the next five years! But all is well with our tall, handsome redhead! He sends his love to you all!



A NOTE FROM KEITH WISEMAN

I am presently in Hare Bay, NL. I arrived here on August 3rd. Up to now I am having a wonderful time.

My time in St. Peter's continues to be both exciting and meaningful. The people are wonderful and are responding to my ministry there. To put it simply.....I am extremely happy.

I have now completed 3 of 6 Learning Circles. Circles 4, 5 and 6 will be completed by November 2021. Although studies in the DLM Program will be complete in November 2021, I still will have one remaining year of SME – Supervised Ministry Education. So It looks as though I will be Recognized as a DLM sometime in 2022. My 2 year contract with St. Peter's Charge ends November 2021. I think they want to keep me for a while longer.

I remain thankful for ongoing support in my ministry training and formation.

Blessings,
Keith



FINANCIAL UPDATE

2020 has proven to be an interesting year regarding the finances at Gower United.

With the projected decline in donation revenue and the rise in expenses we were forecasting a budget shortfall of \$39,297 for the 2020 year. But then along came Covid 19 and the resulting closure of the church building. Besides its impact on the services and activities of the Gower congregation, we were no longer able to generate revenue from the rental of the hall and sanctuary for events and groups. That meant the revenue source would not be available in full for the 2020 year. Fortunately the Etcetera group was able to continue to rent and make a contribution towards operations throughout the pandemic.

Fortunately the church received a large donation to support the operations and was eligible to receive some of the federal government wage subsidy support. This, combined with the staff changes made throughout the summer, helped us to survive through such a difficult time.

As at the end of October we were in a deficit position of \$16,852 which is much better than we projected to be in at this time.

December and the Christmas season usually see the donations greater than any other time of the year and if that proves to be the same for this Christmas we should be able to end the year on a much more positive note than when we started.

If anyone has any questions or is interested in any further info regarding the budget and our finances, please do not hesitate to contact me by email at treasurer@gowerunited.ca or at my office at 738-3333.

Regards,
Fred Earle
Treasurer

GIVING TO GOWER - HOW TO DONATE

We are still accepting donations, weekly offerings, In Memoriam, or for any other special event in your life.

As always, records of these donations are kept, and acknowledgements made where required. If you have questions about how to donate, contact the office via email (office@gowerunited.com) or call 753-7286. Thank you!

If you wish to maintain your financial support of your church during these trying times, there are a few options available.

- Sign up for PAR (Pre Authorized Contributions), or if you are already on PAR, then maybe consider increasing your contribution. This can be done by leaving a message on the office voicemail (709-753-7286) or by email (office@gowerunited.com)
- You can also go to our Website (www.gowerunited.com)
- We also accept e-transfer. Just send it to gsuc@nl.rogers.com
- You may also send a cheque via mail or drop it in the dropbox accessible to the right of the office entrance. Our mailing address is 99 Queens Road, St. John's, NL, A1C 6M6.



GOWER STREET UNITED CHURCH

WHITE GIFT SUNDAY

SUNDAY DECEMBER 6TH AT 11 AM

DONATIONS CAN BE DROPPED OFF SUNDAY MORNINGS
OR TO THE CHURCH OFFICE.

GOWER IS WAITING... ADVENT EVENTS

WORSHIP

Advent One

Advent Pauses (Online Only)

White Gift & Advent Two

Advent Pauses (Online Only)

Advent Three

Advent Pauses (Online Only)

Advent Four

A Quiet Evening of Reflection
(Online Only)

Advent Pauses (Online Only)

DATE/TIME

Nov. 29th at 11 AM

Dec. 2nd at 10 AM

Dec. 6th at 11 AM

Dec. 9th at 10 AM

Dec. 13th at 11 AM

Dec. 16th at 10 AM

Dec. 20th at 11 AM

Dec. 21st at 7 PM

Dec. 23rd at 10 AM

GOWER STREET UNITED CHURCH

STORYTIME WITH REV. PAMELA

Fridays December 4th - 18th, and Wednesday
December 23rd.

Videos on Gower's Youtube page.



GOWER STREET UNITED CHURCH

Christmas Baking Contest

Send us pictures of some Christmas goodies
you have made for Christmas!
We will share the pictures with
congregation on Dec 20th!
We vote and the yummiest looking goodie
will win a prize!





CHRISTMAS EVE AT GOWER

CHRISTMAS EVE FAMILY SERVICE AT 4 PM

**REGISTRATION REQUIRED FOR IN-PERSON
SERVICE WILL BE LIVESTREAMED AS WELL**

CHRISTMAS EVE

COMMUNION SERVICE AT 10 PM

**THIS SERVICE WILL BE VIRTUAL ONLY
VISIT OUR YOUTUBE PAGE FOR WORSHIP**



**TO REGISTER FOR CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP AT 4 PM PLEASE CONTACT
THE CHURCH OFFICE WITH NAME, CONTACT INFORMATION AND
NUMBER OF PEOPLE ATTENDING.**

EMAIL OFFICE@GOWERUNITED.COM OR CALL 709-753-7286

OFFICE HOURS ARE 9:30 - 12:30 TUESDAY-THURSDAY

Get ready for Christ(mas)!



Advent 2020
Calendar

Place this calendar on your fridge and use a magnet to count down the days!

29 Light the 1st Advent candle, giving thanks for Jesus our **Hope**.
 [1st Sunday in Advent]

30 Ask a loved one how you can pray for them this week.

1 Have an instant dance party to your favourite song.

2 Make a handmade gift for a teacher or role model.

3 Pray with those who are looking for signs of hope and new life.

4 Pick up litter in a local park. Remember to wear a mask and gloves.

5 Give an unexpected compliment.

6 Light the 2nd Advent candle, giving thanks for Jesus, Prince of **Peace**.
 [2nd Sunday in Advent]

7 Surprise someone with a homemade treat.


8 Pray with those who are lonely and in need of a friend.

9 List five things that bring you joy

10 Have a buy-nothing day.

11 Do a kind deed for someone else.

12 Pray for the wisdom to find paths to peace.

13 Light the 3rd Advent candle, giving thanks for Jesus, **Joy** of the World.
 [3rd Sunday in Advent]

14 Send a card or thank-you note to a friend.


15 What help might you need in reaching your goals? Ask a loved one to help you.

16 Offer to help a friend or family member do a chore.

17 Pray for the courage to be faithful in difficult situations.

18 Share a meal or snack with someone.

19 Pray for yourself and the gifts you bring to your community.

20 Light the 4th Advent candle, giving thanks for Jesus, **Love** made known.
 [4th Sunday in Advent]

21 Have a garbage-free or reduced-garbage day.

22 Have dinner by candlelight.

23 Tell someone what you love about them.

24 Make a list of the gifts you bring to your community.

25 **Christmas is here!** Send a **Gift with Vision** in a loved one's name. Visit GiftswithVision.ca for options.



For more ideas visit united-church.ca search "advent unwrapped"

The United Church of Canada/L'Église Unie du Canada 2008/9

Advent unwrapped