

GOWER STREET UNITED CHURCH

ADVENT NEWSLETTER

A MESSAGE FROM MINISTRY TEAM

Advent is the beginning of a new calendar year in the Christian church. For Christians, the journey through Advent is a time to reflect and prepare.

Have you ever thought of the church year as a pilgrimage?

Our pilgrimage begins with Advent and moves through the seasons and highpoints of the liturgical year; Epiphany, Lent, Good Friday, Easter, Trinity Sunday, Pentecost (Ordinary Time), the Season of Creation (in the Season of Pentecost). With each transition, we make our journey with worship, prayer and reflection. We invite you to think back to last Advent. How did you make your Advent journey?

As Advent is once again upon us, we invite you to pause to consider this past year and reflect on the following questions; how has your spiritual life grown? Have you taken care of your spirit? Have there been times of struggle? Have there been times of immense joy? When did you intensely feel God's presence, mercy and hope? Where there times when you felt alone? Are there times in the church year that hold a special place in your heart? Why or why not?

All seasons in the church year enable us to move gently and also with gusto as we learn more about ourselves and our spirits, individually and collectively as a community of faith. Perhaps the most important message we can share is that Jesus always walks with us, guiding us, loving us, cradling us, helping us to discern and push ourselves and our hearts into new undiscovered places. We are never alone on the journey.

We invite you to pause, to slow down, to take a deep breath, especially during this time of advent preparation, watching and waiting. We invite you to stay in the moment of Advent yet also look to the journey ahead as we move through the Seasons of the Spirit together.

We extend our deepest blessings for the Season of Advent and the year ahead.

Shalom,

Rev. Pamela, Rev. Ettie and Rev. Rebecca



GOWER STREET UNITED CHURCH PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY

Throughout the centuries, shawls have been made to provide comfort, warmth and protection from the elements. Today's prayer shawls are handmade gifts of well wishes, into which blessings and intentions have been lovingly stitched with prayers for the recipient, offering comfort and warmth of a different kind. With this in mind, knitters and crocheters have picked up their needles, hooks, and yarn to apply their love of craft to making thought-filled gifts for someone special or as a way of showing their concern for others. Creating a gift from the heart has transformed ancient crafts into a modern day spiritual practice.

Similar to praying, spiritual practice involves adding prayer or blessings from our minds and hearts to the work in our hands. A beautiful example of this comes from the Tibetan Buddhist monks who create intricate sand mandalas. These prayerfully created mandalas, amazingly detailed designs made from sand, are one of a kind works of art. Once finished, they are ceremonially deconstructed, never to be duplicated again. Prayers are recited throughout the creation process, bringing about positive intentions in the end, when the sand from the mandala is gathered and ritually returned to the earth. This same spiritual practice can be found in knitting through making prayer shawls and bears.

Every stitch is a seed, and every seed is a blessing. In the true spirit of giving, we stitch a little bit of who we are into every shawl we make. Pieces of our day to day life, the essence of our surroundings, are imbued into our shawls. As shawl makers, we take our works in progress with us to our places of employment to stitch on during breaks, to doctor's appointments, and even to car repair shop waiting areas, as we knit time away.

Seasoned shawl makers can even knit with their eyes closed! So gentle is this process that some knitters have to remind themselves not to drift off to sleep, lulled by the rhythm of the needles. In this way, we make the most ordinary daily events holy.



GOWER STREET UNITED CHURCH PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY

When a prayer shawl is finished, its journey with the shawl maker ends, and it must travel onward to the recipient. Sometimes it's hard to let go of a shawl that we have been working on. It has become a part of us—a part of our lives. We have fallen in love with it! But it must continue to the recipient, where a new chapter will begin. For shawl makers, little pieces of ourselves have now become a part of the fabric. We take a leap of faith and trust that the recipient will bring us along with them on their journey, in whatever way that may be. Blessing a shawl before it goes on to its recipient—as many prayer shawl groups and churches do—can represent a symbolic release of the prayer shawl maker from the shawl.

Gower's Prayer Shawl Ministry is an active group of knitters. We gather in person to chat, knit, bless and prepare the shawls to be distributed to those in need. Gower's Prayer Shawl Ministry partners with the Pastoral Care department at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto. Our prayer bears and shawls comfort and bless those who receive them. Many have visited our sanctuary and taken prayer shawls to loved ones who needed prayer, comfort and hope.

We welcome anyone who would wish to join our group.



OUR CHORAL SCHOLARS

ESTEFANÍA ARREGUÍN

Estefanía Arreguín began her studies in 2009 under the tutelage of Maestro Miguel E. Hernández Sagrero at the Conservatorio de Música y Artes de Celaya, concluding her bachelor's degree as a voice major in 2017.

She was part of the Youth Choir and participated in the different stagings within the institution like "Carmen" by Bizet and "The Magic Flute" by Mozart. She had her first soloist participation in "Chichester Psalms" by Bernstein with the Symphony Orchestra of Guanajuato.

In 2016 she made her debut in the operatic world with the Orquesta Sinfónica de Panamá performing two prominent roles, Zia Principessa in "Suor Angelica" and Suzuki in "Madama Butterfly," both operas by Puccini under the stage direction of Maestro Robert DeSimone.

Currently, she is studying a Music Master's program at Memorial University of Newfoundland Labrador, Canada.



HAYLEY COLLINS

Hayley is 19 years old and a first year Doctor of Pharmacy student at MUN. Hayley and her younger brother Noah have a long history at Gower starting with their grandparents, Shirley and Anderson Abbott, and have grown up participating in its young people's and music programs. Hayley appreciates the opportunity to continue to experience music as a Gower Choral Scholar!

NICK LEBLANC:

Nick Leblanc is a 20-year-old baritone from Prospect Bay, NS, who is entering his 3rd year of a Bachelor's Degree in Voice under Dr. Caroline Schiller at MUN. He has worked as a choral scholar with Gower Street choir, as well as other choirs in Halifax and St. John's, and has sung with the Nova Scotia Youth Choir throughout the province. Aside from vocal performance, Nick also played as a percussionist in the Nova Scotia Youth Orchestra for three years, serving as the section lead for his final year.



AIDAN SACCARY

Aidan Saccary holds a Bachelor of Music (Honours) in Performance from Memorial University. 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 Canada. Aidan is currently completing a Bachelor of Music Education at Memorial with hopes of soon becoming a teacher.



WHY I GIVE TO GOWER

My association with Gower began in 1969. We had just moved to St. John's from Corner Brook. My husband was starting university as a mature student, our son starting Kindergarten, and our three-year-old daughter would be at home with me. Dr. Arthur Kewley was the lead minister, the Rev. George LeDrew his assistant, The Rev. Walter McCabe minister of visitation, and Deaconess Laura Fielder rounded out the team. Our family was made welcome, and we quickly and happily became part of a congregation that, back then, filled the pews on Sunday mornings. There was even an evening service! Our children were in Sunday School, I sang in the choir, and David spent what was often his only free hour of the week enjoying the peace of the sanctuary and the richness of the service.

In 1974, we moved back to Corner Brook and resumed our involvement with First United. On our return to St. John's in 1981, I thought I would try other United Churches in town. One Sunday morning in the spring of 1983, I decided to come to Gower. The sun shot rainbows of light through the stained glass windows, there was warmth all around me. The choir sang my favourite anthem, "All in the April Evening". I was home - and home to stay.

Through the years I have done what countless others here have done, and do, - baked a few cookies, set a few tables, served a few cups of coffee, folded a few bulletins, lent a hand where needed. More formally, I serve on the Worship and Sacraments committee, and volunteer in the office on Thursday, both of which are sources of great joy and satisfaction.

I love this church! She stands proudly - a gem of ecclesiastical architecture. "If (her) walls could speak" - ah, but they do! Within these walls lies a giant quilt of life, it's pieces depicting more than a century of history, of births, marriages, deaths, young men and women going off to wars, some not returning, of lean times, of times of plenty, all stitched together with the dedication and commitment of generations of her congregations and clergy. Our Firm Foundation.

I love her nooks and crannies, the worn patina of the ages, her areas of crumbling plaster, and our determination to repair and retain the beauty within.

I love the sharing of warmth, of friendship, of laughter. I love how even the most reluctant among us will shoulder a task when asked, how so many rally to the challenge when specific projects, like furnace and organ repairs, require additional funding. There is love here!

We sing hymns that have been sung for generations, and have become acquainted with newer, more modern ones. We are enriched by the music of our choirs, the magnificent Casavant organ, the Gower Community Band, and occasional guest speakers and artists.

I am constantly reassured by and grounded in the solemnity of the liturgy. I love the prayers, sermons and writings that make me think, question and seek. I am pleased that our Church has adapted to changing times and lifestyles, but has not discarded its fundamental, traditional foundations. We have a ministerial team that is cohesive, innovative and dedicated to ensuring that we are an effective entity unto ourselves as well as in the wider community. How fortunate we are!

Yes, I give to Gower - for all of the above, and more. But, oh, how very much more Gower gives to me!

Gwen Alcock Oct 9/22



THANK YOU & MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM STEWARDSHIP

Enclosed you will find a note of thanks and some updated information with regards to fundraising efforts. As well, a letter submitted from Edsel Bonnell who is an active member of the Octogenarian Fundraising Team.

We would like to express our sincere appreciation and thanks to all those who have contributed to our fundraising efforts throughout this past year. Together we have raised almost \$21,000 to contribute to the Operations of the Church and to Mission and Service.

THE HYMN SING	\$2,400.00
OCTOGENARIAN FUND	\$6,200.00 (which is still accepting donations)
CONCERT & DESSERT AUCTION	\$5,400.00
ONLINE AUCTION	\$8,756.00 GROSS, WE NETTED \$8,300.00
	\$22,300.00

Whether you have contributed by participating in organizing the events, by donating or attending we Thank You!

As always, as we head into the Advent season, we are counting on increased giving's. This year it is more important than ever as we face a significant deficit. So please consider what you can do to help us through this challenging time.

With gratitude, we wish you a Blessed and Peaceful Christmas!

Ruth Francis, Tony Chadwick, Ken Peters, Rev. Pamela, Lorne LeDrew

THANK YOU & MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM STEWARDSHIP CONTINUED

PRAISE IN A PANDEMIC: WELL DONE SENIORS, WELL DONE GOWER!

This current generation of senior citizens have much of which to be proud, especially in dealing with the continuing challenges of Covid-19 and its many variants. Their situation is unique. Through 2020 and 2021, the entire population had to battle the Virus with personal protective measures and the development of vaccines, but seniors were in the most danger because of the inevitable health conditions associated with aging. Still, at the end of 2021, only 18 deaths had been reported in all the cases of Covid-19 in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Then 2022 came with the variant Omicron and its many "children" of sub-variants, all of which are "breakthrough" viruses which can infect victims despite all the vaccinations they have received. The death toll began to rise rapidly and by November had reached a total of 267 (92.8% of whom were seniors over 60). While all generations up to 60 could "catch" Covid with "flu-like symptoms", then stay home for a few days and go back to normal living, many vulnerable seniors were dying.

So now we have two constituencies: "Us" and "Them"! What applies to one does not apply to the other. While protective measures such as cleansing, masking and self-distancing are now voluntary for the under-60s, they are still essential for seniors. You can spot the seniors with their masks in the supermarket, bank, or pharmacy, and even (sadly) in some churches, where younger generations can go bare-faced, even in large venues for concerts and sports activities. Sometimes, seniors feel a little embarrassed to wear their masks in such places. But they should feel proud!

The Octogenarian fundraising group at Gower, headed by the Very Rev. Dr. Marion Parry, has been well aware of the generational disparity and has undertaken such projects as the very successful "Seniors' Sunday" on October 23. Joyfully, Gower showed its sensitivity to these issues, and masks were everywhere to be seen on that special day as the people of the Church expressed their respect and appreciation for the many gifts from seniors, which we all enjoy, treasure, and especially understand! Truly, Gower cares!

We have many new challenges ahead. Worldwide, health authorities are expecting a seasonal "surge" of Covid cases and associated seniors' deaths in the months ahead. Indeed, there is some evidence that the surge has already begun here in NL. I am keeping abreast of the situation in weekly reports and statistics. Anyone who would care to receive these one-page statistical tables can do so by simply sending an e-mail to edselbonnell@bellaliant.net, and you'll be on the list immediately.

Christmas is approaching, and we all look forward with joy and anticipation to the blessings of the season, which include visitation with family and friends. It is indeed challenging to keep up Covid protective measures, especially cleansing, masking and self-distancing, in a season of hugging and kissing and feasting! But it can be done, even when masks are removed for enjoying a turkey and sipping a festive glass! And if it prevents illness or death of beloved seniors, surely it is well worth the effort.

Take good care, all! And many blessings!

Edsel Bonnell



BRIEF REPORT AS AN UPDATE TO THE FINANCIAL POSITION OF THE CHURCH

Previously we had reported that the Church had incurred a \$128,000 shortfall for the Period January 01 to August 31, 2022. In the two months following that, the situation has remained fairly stable but has not worsened. The month of September showed a shortfall of (\$1,823), and the biggest reason why the shortfall was not larger was that we received \$9,220 as a reimbursement for our summer students and there was no fuel oil delivery for the month. The month of October 2022 showed a surplus of \$3,975 for the month. This was primarily due to combined receipts of \$5,900 from the desert fundraiser and Reverend Marion's Octogenarian fundraiser, a receipt of \$4,100 from the United Church Restorative Care Program as reimbursement for the vacated administration position as well, we also had no fuel oil delivery in October. The accumulated deficit for January to October was (\$126,276).

November should hopefully be close to breakeven as we had a successful fall auction that should generate in excess of \$8,000 in revenue after all expenses are paid. However, the oil deliveries have started, and our first delivery of furnace oil is in excess of \$8,700.00.

The Board is presently working on a multi-faceted approach to increasing revenues and reducing expenditures so as to reduce the operating deficit as much as possible. There is another meeting this week to deal specifically with the financial issues facing the Church.

December month has historically been a time when giving's are much higher and hopefully this year will be no different as we look to the congregation and the community for an increased level of support.

Please feel free to reach out to me with any comments or questions.

Regards

Fred Earle
Treasurer

PLAN TO TACKLE DEFICIT

At our last board meeting I presented a multi faceted approach to tackle our deficit. Fred Earle, Pat Griffin and myself have proposed six avenues of cost cutting/changes to help bring our expenses more in line with our revenue stream. It was agreed at the November 17th meeting that the board would meet again on November 24th and spend the entire meeting discussing these avenues. I am not in a position to outline these initiatives as they are still in the early stages and have not been given their due process by the board, however please rest assured that the board will be addressing the deficit and a plan will be coming forward to bring our finances in line.

While the numbers seem rather daunting we are confident that the suggested plan of approach will allow us to achieve our goals. We realize the congregation may have some questions and concerns and the board's objective is to share the information with the congregation. With that in mind we will be providing regular updates on our financial position and we will share as much information as possible as to our plan going forward.

Please feel free to reach out to Patrick, Fred or myself should you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,
Ken Peters
Chair of Finance



GIVING TO GOWER - HOW TO DONATE

If you wish to help maintain the financial support of Gower 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) and click DONATE
- 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.

As always, records of all donations are kept, and acknowledgements are 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!

GIVING TO GOWER - IN MEMORIAM OR CELEBRATION DONATIONS FOR CHRISTMAS

During Advent and Christmas, we are accepting donations in memoriam and in celebration of special events in your life. These donations will be acknowledged and published in the Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Bulletins.

Please donate using any of the methods listed above. Ensure you include a note of details to be published in the bulletin. The deadline to have donations published for the bulletin is December 21 at 4 pm. Any donations received after this date will be included in the January 1 bulletin.

If you have questions about how to donate, contact the office via email (office@gowerunited.com) or call 753-7286 during office hours.



GOWER IS WAITING.. ADVENT EVENTS

GOWER STREET UNITED CHURCH

Advent Pauses

Join our Ministry Team each Thursday in Advent
at 10 AM online for a reflective time inspired by
On the Way to Bethlehem by Hilary McDowell

Thursday, December 1
Thursday, December 8
Thursday, December 15
Thursday, December 22

Gower Is Waiting...

GOWER STREET UNITED CHURCH

WHITE GIFT SUNDAY

SUNDAY DECEMBER 4TH AT 11 AM

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



CHRISTMAS EVE AT GOWER

CHRISTMAS EVE FAMILY

WORSHIP AT 4:00 P.M.

worship will be in person and livestreamed

CHRISTMAS EVE

COMMUNION WORSHIP AT 10:30 P.M.

WITH SPECIAL MUSIC FROM SENIOR CHOR

worship will be in person and livestreamed

WORSHIP ON DECEMBER 25TH, 2022 WILL BE ONLINE ONLY,
VIDEO AVAILABLE STARTING AT 11:00 A.M. ON YOUTUBE

JOIN US IN PERSON OR ONLINE FOR WORSHIP ON JANUARY 1, 2023
AT 11:00 A.M. COFFE TO FOLLOW IN PERSON

DESSERT AUCTION AND CONCERT

On behalf of the organizing committee, I would like to thank everyone who helped make our 2022 Dessert Auction and Concert so successful. Hats off, and bravo to the bakers for their delicious creations. Another round of applause for the brilliant musicians who so generously shared their talents with us. I also want to recognize the financial support and volunteers who helped make our evening successful. Together, over wonderful music and tasty treats, we raised approximately \$6000 in support of our church and its numerous outreach activities. From all the positive feedback and comments, it appears this will be an annual Gower event, so until next year!

Yours truly,
David Robbins, Chair

Committee Members

Bert Riggs
Doug Dunsmore
Carl Goulding
Lorne LeDrew
Ken Peters
Fred Earle
Rev Rebecca Pike
Rev Pamela Jones-Fitzgerald



RECENT EVENTS



Gower Handbell Choir in worship on November 13, 2022



Gower Young Peoples Choir in worship on November 20, 2022