

GOWER STREET UNITED CHURCH

ADVENT NEWSLETTER

Dear People of God,

We live in a world that is desperately hurting; war and violence fill our TV screens; the cost of living continues to rise; the housing crisis seemingly becomes worse; our neighbours continue to live in poverty and hunger. Still, the season of Advent, hope and peace beckons us. The beauty, holiness and stillness of Christmas night poignantly sits at our doorstep.

Advent invites us to a time of connection with others through community activity and faithful worship.

This advent here at Gower we invite you to partake of the many offerings: beautifully prepared turkey dinners, inspiring and peace-filled worship filled with brilliant music, informal conversation and connection during coffee hour after worship, Advent Pauses online, Blue Christmas online Worship, Christmas Ponderings and Discussion by Zoom, Stella's Circle Alternative Christmas Service, Gower Community Band's Christmas Pops Concert, Meditation Advent offering, Christmas Eve Family Service with a special reading of *The Wishing Tree* by Meika Hashimoto and music by the Young People's Choir, Christmas Communion and Sacred Music, and a New Year's Eve Service of Holy Blessing.

However alone you may feel, may God fill you with God's peace!

Whatever pain you may be suffering, may the beautiful and sacred story of the nativity be your consolation!

May God grant that you live in the Light of Jesus' presence!



Christmas night speaks of Jesus, of angels proclaiming a new Light, of shepherds coming to worship our God. Jesus reached out of eternity into time, from heaven unto earth, in order to be near us and among us in all of our moments of suffering and despair, happiness and humor. Jesus is God with us.

Let us open the doors of our homes, of our families and of our hearts to Jesus.

Let us open wide the doors of our historic, beautiful sanctuary to those who may desperately need a space of peace and hope this season. We continue to work hard and thus have much to be proud of!

What a great Advent and Christmas gift to share what we have in heart and hand with others!

May this Season of Advent bring you closer to the Spirit of the Holy, whatever that may be for each of you. May the Peace, Love, Hope and Joy of the miraculous, awe-inspiring Christmas Night be yours to hold and treasure.

Rev. Pamela and Rev. Rebecca

CHORAL UPDATE

The Senior Choir

Advent is an exciting season for the Gower Street United Church Choir family, as we work to prepare music for the joyous celebration of Christmas, while weekly singing advent carols and anthems. All in all, it's a musically rich time in the church calendar, and we're all looking forward to it.

The choir family continues to grow, and we really appreciate the musical talent present within the choir, and as the choral director, I am certainly enjoying the choir year.

The church choir currently has 29 singers, 15 returning singers and 14 new members this year. Our choir consists of a group of dedicated longtime singers, who have faithfully provided the very base of our worship for many years. Longtime choir members include, in alphabetical order, Clay, Deborah, Joanna, Jonathan, Karen & Ken, Ken, Linda, Marilyn, Marion, Maude, Peter, Roberta, Rosanne and Tony.

This year's fourteen newest choir members include, Alex, Ava, Diane, Justin, Megan and Sue. The four university choral scholars are Hayley, Juliette, Lia and Leah. The four high school singers include Emma, Lucas, Riley and Ty.

The Wendy & Carl Stevenson Choral Bursary Program

The choral music program of Gower Street United Church is richly diverse and celebrates a musical heritage that makes us all very proud. The young people who are the recipients of the choral scholarship program enhance the choir and we are very grateful for the continuing donations to the fund that makes this bursary possible.

The Young People's Choir

Music teachers, Justin and Megan, teach the Young People's Choir each Sunday morning, and we are looking forward to the Christmas Eve Family Service when we will hear them sing. The eighteen singers are, in alphabetical order, Abby, Alex, Arianna, Bonnie, Caleb, Charlie, Charlotte, Emilia, Henry, Jada, Jasmine, Kiarra, Megan, Molly, Naomi, Norah, Sadie and Sam. The rich choral music heritage within our church community is certainly present in this generation of young choristers.



Musical Heritage - CDs

This Advent and Christmas season, we will be making available a large number of CD (and even some cassette tape ☺) recordings of Gower Street Choir in the years gone past. The congregation will certainly enjoy these professionally recorded musical treasures, so we are placing them in the church porch for distribution. If you would like, and are able, to make a financial contribution, a collection jar will be available. Please take these CDs home to enjoy the musical memories of the past, and then come join us at Gower Street United Church this Christmas to enjoy more wonderful Christmas music in our beautiful and historic church sanctuary.

R. Carl Goulding
Organist and Choir Director

PEACE OF MIND POP-UPS

It was with a rueful look back in the spring that I announced the end of my biking days to my husband. It just didn't feel safe anymore. The activity was an accident waiting to happen. There would be no more flying down Springdale Street, no more whoops of joy from reaching the top of the hill in Bowring Park. My future on the pump track at Quidi Vidi lake was over before it began. My cycling days were over.

Acceptance of the aging body doesn't come easy, but I have learned that we can reframe our situation at every stage of life. Adaptation is part of our human make-up; we are wired to live.

The fact we have reached what some days feels like one hundred years or more is a grand cause for celebration. We have learned that life's journey is not just about the physical body, and that it's never too late to begin something new.

'Active aging' is a term used to describe the maintenance of positive, subjective well-being, good physical, social and mental health and continued involvement in one's family, peer group and community throughout the aging process. It is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as "the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age."

Earlier this year, the Seniors' Group at Gower, under the steerage of Anthony Chadwick, entertained offering yoga sessions for members of the congregation.

Pop-up Chair yoga in the spring and October proved the brilliance of the idea. The results in improved balance, walking skills and overall well-being were very much appreciated.

Please join us for our next pop-up session:

Peace of Mind Meditation, on Tuesday, December 12 at 11:00 a.m. in the Sanctuary.

Studies of meditation have shown that its practice reduces stress and anxiety, lowers blood pressure, reduces chronic pain and improves health, vitality and self-esteem. If you have never meditated or if you have tried and found it difficult to continue your practice, yet you still have interest, please join us.

Seasoned meditators will also benefit from an extra hour of peace during Advent's busy time. Wear comfortable clothing, carry along a cushion if you need, and bring a shawl or blanket to contain the energy and keep away the drafts.

Donation basis (cash, cheque or e-transfer), with all proceeds going to Stella's Circle, our Christmas fundraiser and offering.

We look forward to seeing you there.

SuAn,

a semi-retired yoga/meditation teacher, who strongly supports and promotes 'active aging' opportunities as we age out in health and happiness.

PASTORAL CARE UPDATES

The Pastoral Care Committee is in the process of re-establishing pastoral care ministry, following the passing of Reverend Ettie. Her work was extensive, keeping track of significant milestones in the lives of our ageing congregation, responding to bereavements and other family difficulties, as well as maintaining telephone, email, and personal contacts with those who were unable to attend worship in person. She kept contact with over a hundred people in Gower's faith community, working well beyond the nominal 10 hours for which she was contracted. Farewell, dear friend!

Reverend Rebecca has been engaged to take on the role of Pastoral Care Minister. Acute matters, such as hospitalization, or bereavement, may continue to be directed to Rev. Pamela. The Committee is working to prepare for the distribution of Christmas baskets; to make sure that no one is accidentally left off our list, please contact Tony Chadwick via email: pchair@gowerunited.com or call the church office. The same contact points may be used to inform us of significant milestones: 90th+ birthdays, 60th+ wedding anniversaries, or of any occurrence that you think requires a response from the Pastoral Care team.

Respectfully submitted,
Tony Chadwick, Chair of Pastoral Care



PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY

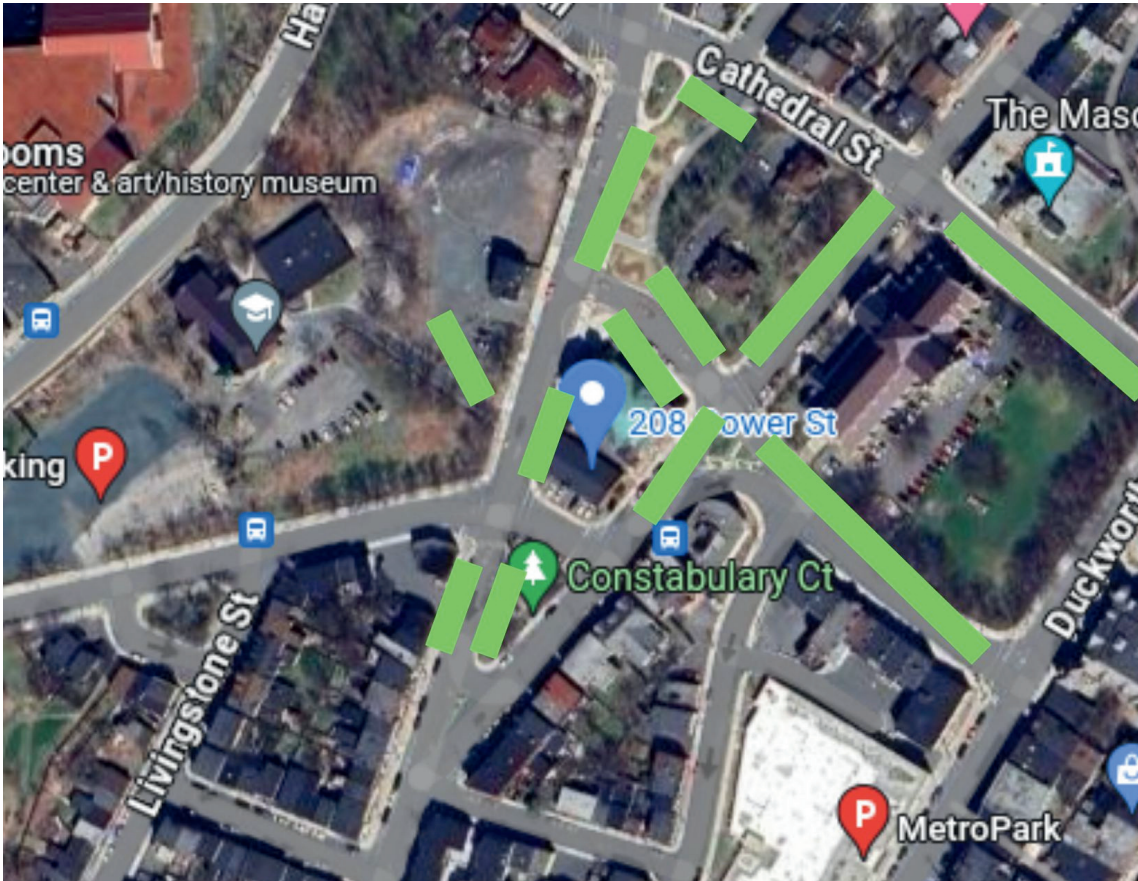
The Prayer Shawl ministry group meets regularly at Gower. It is a very small, yet active group! We are in desperate need of new members. Membership does not require you to attend meetings however meetings are fun! Meetings are a time of fellowship, friendship and conversation, a time of prayer to bless and take account of prayer bears and shawls.

If you need or would like to learn to knit, the Prayer Shawl Ministry could use your skills and enthusiasm! The ministry of this group is far reaching (Prayer Shawls and Bears are regularly sent to patients at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto). Thus the Prayer Shawl Ministry is continually needing to replenish supplies of shawls and bears. If you are interested in learning to knit shawls or bears please connect with Prayer Shawl President, Ruth Francis (prayershawl@gowerunited.com).



GOWER PARKING

There are lots of options for parking at our church, but it's not all located in a single large parking lot alongside the building. Here is a helpful map, with potential parking spots located in green, as well as one free parking lot (located off Long's Hill) and one paid parking lot (located on Duckworth Street).



BULLETIN DEDICATIONS

The Worship and Sacraments Committee invites members of our faith community to help with the cost of printing weekly bulletins. It costs us approximately \$12.00 to have color printed bulletin covers.

You may dedicate a bulletin of any particular Sunday in memory of a loved one, in celebration of a significant event, or in celebration of a life's milestone. The name of Memoriam/Celebration/Milestone and Donor will appear in the bulletin on the specified Sunday.

Please forward any donations to the church office and contact SuAn, the office administrator, during office hours on Wednesdays and Thursdays from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. via email (gsuc@nl.rogers.com) or phone 709-753-7286 ext. 200.



MINUTE FOR AFFIRM

Over the past year, protests and counter-protests have erupted across Canada in response to curriculum related to sexual orientation and gender identity in schools, LGBTQ+ rights, use of pronouns, and inclusive washrooms. On September 20th, 2023, the “1 Million March 4 Children”, saw people across the country take part in a protest they say aims to protect children from “premature sexualization and potential harmful indoctrination” (see <https://millionmarch4children.squarespace.com/>). Counter-protesters, including United Church leaders, challenged the movement, stating that it promoted “misinformation, intolerance and hate toward the 2SLGBTQIA+ community” (see <https://broadview.org/united-church-protest-anti-lgbtq2s/>).

In St. John's No Space for Hate NL, a local pro-LGBTQ+ group organized their own counter-protest. Clergy from Gower and St. James joined with clergy from other United Churches and hundreds of other people in the wider St. John's area in support of inclusion, LGBTQ+ rights, and safe school spaces.

Why did we show up?

The United Church of Canada is an inclusive, respectful, and welcoming denomination. We are called to Daring Justice, which requires us to show up and challenge the spaces where there is inequity. We are also Affirming Congregations committed to being Public, Intentional, and Explicit in our welcome and presence. We showed up to offer compassion and solidarity to show that we believe in a God who loves all individuals and desires an inclusive society. We are called to be carriers of the light!

We know that there is misinformation, confusion, and concerns from many, both in the broader society and in our church communities. The affirming committees from Gower Street and St. James United Churches are planning a joint education event and dialogue early in 2024. The Affirm Committee invites you to submit your questions about the protests or counter-protests or any other issue related to being an affirming ministry, so we can plan for a safe and respectful event that will address misinformation, offer facts about gender inclusive curricula, and provide space for your questions and concerns. You can send your feedback to the Affirm committee via email (affirm@gowerunited.com) or drop it to the church office.

Gail Wideman, on behalf of the Affirm Committee: Jill Handrigan, Larry Kelly, Rev. Rebecca and Rev. Pamela



DESSERT AUCTION AND CONCERT

On behalf of the organizing committee, I want to thank everyone who helped make our 2023 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 \$3475.80 in support of our church and its numerous outreach activities. From all the positive feedback and comments, this has become an annual Gower event, so until next year!

Respectfully submitted,
Tony Chadwick and David Robbins, co-chairs,
Committee Members:

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



GOWER SENIORS GROUP

In addition to organizing a yoga exercise group, the main function of the seniors' group has been focused on the annual Seniors' Christmas Gala, held on the last Tuesday of November each year. The event is open to all seniors in the city, and we have been able to offer limited transportation to and from the event. Thank you, Lorne LeDrew, Bruce Nickerson, and Ken Peters! The turkey dinner, with all the trimmings, including Christmas pudding, was prepared and served by Pat Burton Catering. The organizing committee prepared three door prizes, and a Grand Christmas Basket was raffled to raise funds. A donation has been made to a local charity. 94 tickets were sold!

Entertainment was provided again this year by members of the Walsh Family, whose blend of traditional Newfoundland music and Christmas carols delighted the audience. We are fortunate indeed to have such a talented group help us bring in the Christmas season!

Respectfully submitted,
Tony Chadwick
Linda Nickerson
JoAnna Bennett
Joyce Power



51ST ANNUAL ONLINE AUCTION A SUCCESS

The Organizing Committee would like to express our sincere thanks to all who contributed to this year's Auction. We had over 147 items donated and as a result total Bids were in excess of \$6,600. We also received some cash donations, so when all is said and done, we will net about \$6,500, which is to be split between the Gower Service and Social Club and the Board. So once again Thank you!

Bert Riggs, Ruth Francis, Ken Peters, Lloyd Gill, Fred Earle, Lorne LeDrew (and lots of help from Rebecca and SuAn)

THANK YOU
SO MUCH

UPDATE ON GOWER'S FINANCIAL POSITION

The hard work of members of the Gower Board and countless volunteers is starting to yield the financial results that we were hoping for and striving to achieve. We have Spirit of Newfoundland settled into their new theatre space. We are still waiting on the installation of some of the new doors and that will be starting this week and hopefully commence in the next few weeks. Rental income is climbing, and all our tenants are helping to contribute to this success. Our investment income is growing as well. While the increase in interest rates is hard on many families, it provides the opposite effect for those dependent on income growth. For Gower, the increase in interest rates has been very helpful in yielding higher returns, helping us cut into our deficit. Contributions from all the members of Gower are and continue to be one of the key components of our revenue stream. We thank you all for your continued support.

Our results for the year so far, to the end of October, show Gower with a deficit of approximately \$84 thousand dollars. We also have approximately \$25 thousand in renovation expenses that we have already paid that will be removed from our operating expenses and transferred to the restoration account once the loan for the renovations is received. This will adjust our deficit to approximately \$59 thousand dollars. This time last year we were sitting at an operating deficit of \$126 thousand dollars so we have at this point cut that deficit in half. Going forward through November and December we are confident that we will continue to eat away at the current deficit. While it is difficult to predict where we will end the year we are relatively optimistic that we will be in the deficit range of \$20-\$30 thousand dollars. This is more than we would like but it is a huge improvement from the \$110 thousand deficit we saw at the end of last year. Energy expenses continue to be a tremendous expense and we are in the process of meeting with engineers to start to address this and hopefully have some news going forward.

Sincerely,
Ken Peters, Chair of Finance
Fred Earle, Treasurer

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 (gsuc@nl.rogers.com)
- You can also go to our Website (www.gowerunited.com) and click DONATE or by scanning the QR Code to the right.
- 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 (gsuc@nl.rogers.com) or call 709-753-7286. Thank you!

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 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 Wednesday, December 20 at 4 pm. Any donations received after this date will be included in the December 31 bulletin.

If you have questions about how to donate, contact the office via email (gsuc@nl.rogers.com) or call 709-753-7286 during office hours.



GOWER IS WAITING - ADVENT EVENTS

Advent Pauses

Online throughout Advent, the Ministry Team will offer a reflective time inspired by *Bless The Advent we Actually Have* by Kate Bowler and The Everything Happens Project. These videos will be posted on [Gower's YouTube Channel](#) at 9:00 a.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays throughout December, starting Thursday, December 7.

Our Advent Kindness Tree

The liturgical season of Advent is focused on quiet reflection and waiting; the wider culture is focused on buying and consuming. Our Bless This Advent discussion group has reflected on how we will be living into Advent in the hustle and bustle. This group invites the community to join us this Advent with a focus on values like kindness, service and giving during this time. Starting Sunday, Dec 10, we will have a kindness tree in the church and invite you to take a decoration off the tree each week. Throughout that week, you are invited to complete the act of kindness once or multiple times.

Etcetera Lessons and Carols

On Sunday, December 10, at 6:30 p.m. (Doors open at 5:30 p.m.), come for an evening of Lessons and Carols presented by Etcetera Productions in the Gower sanctuary. Tickets are purchased at the door for \$20.00.

Peace of Mind Meditation

Join SuAn on Tuesday, December 12 at 11:00 a.m. in the sanctuary. Everyone welcomed. Donations accepted, with all proceeds going to Stella's Circle, our Christmas fundraiser and offering.

Stella's Circle Alternative Service

Everyone is welcome at the Stella's Circle Alternative Service. This is a time of community and holiday reflection taking place in the the Gower sanctuary on Wednesday, December 13 at 4:00 p.m.

A Special Advent Pause for a Blue Christmas Online Worship

On Thursday, December 21 at noon, on [Gower's YouTube Channel](#) the ministry team will be posting a worship video for Blue Christmas.



WHITE GIFT SUNDAY

SUNDAY DECEMBER 10TH AT 11 AM

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

 Gower United Street Church
Open Hearts • Open Minds • Open Arms



Join us for Christmas with
Gower Senior Choir &
Gower Community Band

December 17, 2022 at 10:30 a.m.
In-person & Online

 GCB 50th

 Gower United Street Church
Open Hearts • Open Minds • Open Arms

CHRISTMAS AT GOWER

CHRISTMAS EVE AT GOWER

Family Worship at 11:00 A.M.
with special music from Gower Young
People's Choir

Communion Worship at 7:00 P.M.
with special music from Gower Senior
Choir

Both worships will be in person
and livestreamed on YouTube



Join us in person or online for Worship on December 31, 2023 at 11:00 a.m. for the first Sunday After Christmas with a New Year Blessing Coffee to follow for those joining us in person.



GRATITUDE

October was Clergy Appreciation month. The Ministry and Personnel Committee gifted the ministry team a beautiful fruit basket, on behalf of the congregation.

Rev. Pamela and Rev. Rebecca extend gratitude and blessings to all those who sent us messages and cards of appreciation during this month.



BRIDGES TO HOPE

When Rev. Rebecca was speaking with Jodi Williams, Executive Director of Bridges to Hope in late November, he shared with her that the Holiday Hampers sold out in thirty minutes this year. We all know that constant rise in the cost of living is making it difficult for so many people in our community. As a result Bridges to Hope has more hungry families, including children and seniors relying on them then ever before!

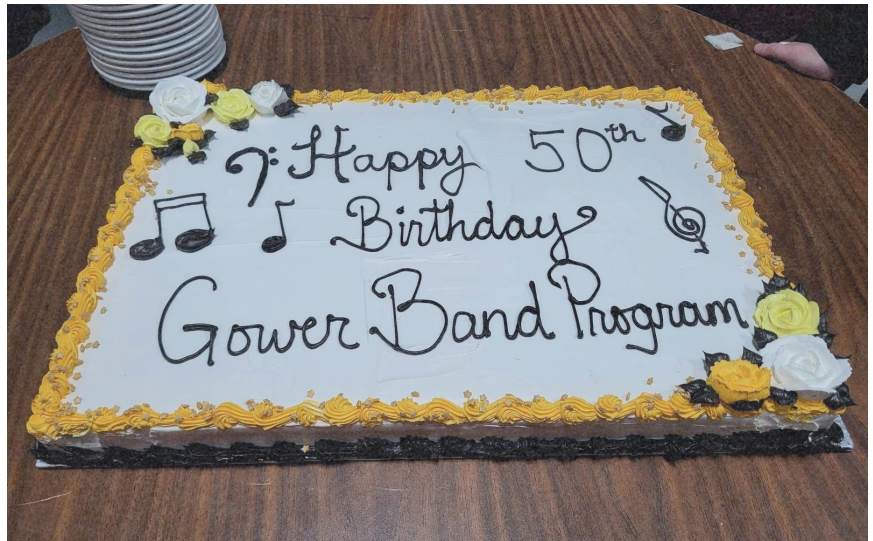
Jody also shared that the food item that Bridges to Hope spends the most on each year is boxes of cereal. Throughout this Advent we you to consider bringing a box of cereal or other non-perishable food items to Gower for donation to Bridges to Hope. Doug Moody is Gower's representative on the Bridges to Hope Board of Directors. Please reach out to him for any information or questions. Also keep an eye out for the details for our 2nd Annual Song Writers Circle in Support of Bridges to Hope coming up in March 2024.



RECENT EVENTS



On October 29, we celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the Gower Community Band in Worship



Gower Community Band's new logo in celebration of their 50th Anniversary.

RECENT EVENTS



For the Gower Service and Social Club dinner meeting on November 21, the Kitchen Staff of Spirit of Newfoundland helped make the Poached Salmon meal as the space was shared between the two groups.

Roy West kept a close eye on the cooking to ensure the meal was perfect!



RECENT EVENTS



While the Santa Clause Parade sadly didn't go ahead on November 26, our traditional KD and Hot Dog Lunch did!

Thanks to all those who helped prepare, serve and clean up the meal!



On Tuesday, Nov 28 our Sanctuary was decorated by Doug Peters, Lloyd Gill, Peter Nell, Bruce Nickerson, and Tom Strong for Advent and Christmas.

Thank you, Doug, Lloyd, Peter, Bruce and Tom for decorating our space so beautifully!

