

# Gower Street United Church

## Advent Newsletter

As we enter the season of Advent, we are invited into a time of preparation, reflection, and joyful anticipation. Advent marks the beginning of the Christian liturgical year. It is a season that invites us to wait in hopeful expectation for the coming of Jesus—both in the celebration of His birth at Christmas and in the anticipation of His return in glory.

Advent is a season of waiting. It is often described as a time of "holy waiting." In the busy rush of our daily lives, it can be easy to forget the power and purpose of waiting. However, Advent reminds us that waiting can be a sacred practice. It is during these weeks that we reflect on the promises of God, the prophecies of the Messiah's coming, and the deep longing for peace, joy, and reconciliation in the world.

The word "Advent" itself means "coming"—a time when we remember that God is coming into our world, not only through the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem but also through God's ongoing presence in our lives. As we wait, we look for signs of hope, peace, joy, and love in the world around us.

As we move through this liturgical season, you will see that the themes of Advent are hope, peace, joy, and love. Each week of Advent focuses on a different theme, helping us to prepare our hearts for the coming of Jesus:

**Week 1 – Hope:** In the first week of Advent, we focus on the hope that Jesus brings into our lives. We remember that no matter how difficult our circumstances, God's promises are always true, and the light of Jesus shines in the chaos.

**Week 2 – Peace:** Advent is a time to reflect on the peace that Jesus brings to our world. As we wait for Jesus' coming, we pray for peace in our hearts, in our communities, and in the world.

**Week 3 – Joy:** In the third week, we celebrate the joy that comes with the arrival of Jesus. This is a time to rejoice in the goodness of God and the joy Jesus brings to our lives.

**Week 4 – Love:** Finally, we focus on the love of God revealed in the birth of Jesus. This love is unconditional and transformative, and it calls us to share that love with others.

Advent is not just a time for reflection—it is also an opportunity for active engagement in the life of the faith community and the world.

Here are a few practices to incorporate into your Advent season:

**Advent Wreath:** Light a candle each Sunday as a family or individually. Reflect on the theme of the week and say a prayer as you light each candle, making room for peace and stillness in your week.

**Acts of Kindness:** Advent calls us to be a light to others. Consider ways to practice kindness, generosity, or service during this season. Small gestures of love can make a big difference.

**Advent Calendar:** Use an Advent calendar to count down the days to Christmas. Whether with Scripture readings, prayers, or small acts of kindness, Advent calendars can help us stay grounded in the season's true meaning. \*(There is an advent calendar found in this newsletter.)

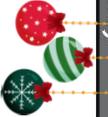
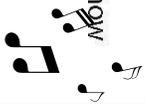
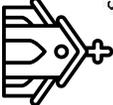
**Silent Reflection:** Take moments throughout the week to pause in silence, to pray, and to listen for God's voice. This can help create space for deeper reflection amid the season's busyness.

As we move through this season of Advent, let us all be reminded that Jesus is coming—not only in the celebration of Christmas but in our daily lives. Let us prepare our hearts and minds to receive the Spirit with openness, humility, and joy.

I look forward to journeying with you this Advent and Christmas, celebrating the many ways Jesus is revealed in our lives and in our community. May this season be a time of profound hope, peace, joy, and love for each of you.

With warmest and heartfelt blessings,  
Rev. Pamela



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>1</p> <p>First Sunday of Advent</p> <p>Reflect on your reasons for hope this Christmas.</p> <p><i>Hope</i></p>	<p>2</p> <p>Do some Christmas baking (cookies or any other treats)! </p>	<p>3</p> <p>Read Isaiah 35:4.</p> <p></p>	<p>4</p> <p>Think about what gift you are going to give Jesus this Christmas. </p>	<p>5</p> <p>Are you preparing your heart for Christmas? </p>	<p>6</p> <p>Get festive, and do some Christmas decorating! </p>	<p>7</p> <p>What is God calling you to this Advent? </p>
<p>8</p> <p>Second Sunday of Advent</p> <p>Reach out to someone you are grateful for and tell that person thank you.</p>	<p>9</p> <p>Watch a Christmas movie </p>	<p>10</p> <p>Read a Christmas book. </p>	<p>11</p> <p>Listen to your favorite Christmas music. </p>	<p>12</p> <p>Read Matthew 1:23. </p>	<p>13</p> <p>Help someone in need (adopt a family, donate to a food pantry, spend time with someone who is lonely).</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Attend a Christmas show or concert. </p>
<p>15</p> <p>Third Sunday of Advent</p> <p>Where do you find joy? </p>	<p>16</p> <p>Write someone a note of encouragement. </p>	<p>17</p> <p>Read Isaiah 61:10. </p>	<p>18</p> <p>Spend some time in a quiet church this week. </p>	<p>19</p> <p>Make a gratitude list. </p>	<p>20</p> <p>Make hot chocolate and have some quiet time. </p>	<p>21</p> <p>Drive around and see Christmas lights. </p>
<p>22</p> <p>Fourth Sunday of Advent</p> <p>Take time today to reflect on what Jesus' coming means to you personally. </p>	<p>23</p> <p>Go Christmas caroling with family or friends. </p>	<p>24</p> <p>Read the Nativity story (Luke 2:1-20). </p>	<p>25</p> <p><i>Merry Christmas</i> </p>			
<p>ADVENT 2024</p>						

# Gower Is Waiting...

## *Advent Pauses*

Join our Ministry Team each Friday in Advent at 10 AM online for a reflective time inspired by *The Weary World Rejoices* from *The Everything Happens Project* with Kate Bowler.

Friday, November 29  
Friday, December 6  
Friday, December 13  
Friday, December 20



## *Bless This Advent*

WEEKLY DISCUSSION GROUP  
THURSDAYS AT 6:00 P.M. ON  
ZOOM

This weekly group discussion group is a time to gather in community and reflect together during the Season of Advent.

## *A Quiet Evening of Reflection*

A VIRTUAL BLUE CHRISTMAS  
WORSHIP  
DEC. 21ST AT 7 PM  
ON GOWER STREET UNITED CHURCH  
YOUTUBE PAGE

Advent is a special time in the life of the church. It marks the beginning of a new church year—a time for reflection, preparation, and waiting. These weeks invite us to pause and turn our hearts toward the hope, peace, joy, and love of Jesus' birth. Yet, Advent also takes place during one of the busiest times of the year. Holiday gatherings, shopping lists, and endless preparations seem to pull us in every direction, making it challenging to embrace the stillness that this season invites.

Advent holds an even deeper meaning for me this year as I prepare for another sacred celebration—my wedding. As you might imagine, the weeks leading up to such an event are filled with planning, decision-making, and excitement. I've found myself reflecting on how the wedding preparation experience mirrors the Advent themes.

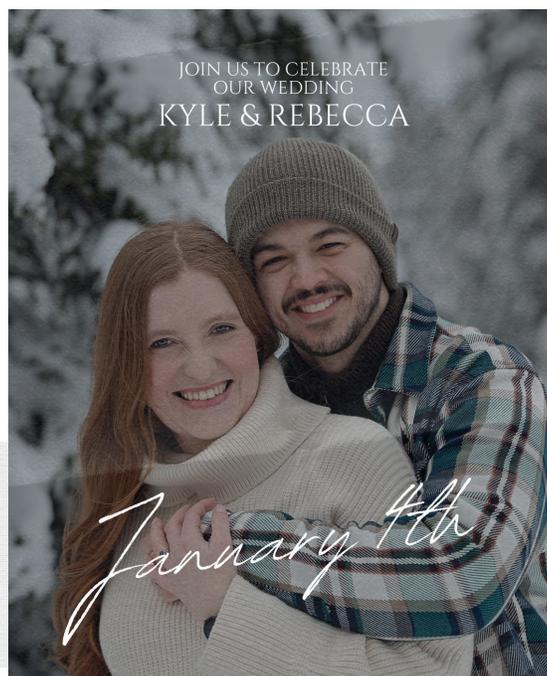
Both seasons are times of waiting and anticipation, of preparing not just outwardly but inwardly as well. With so many details, it's easy to focus on the tasks and lose sight of what truly matters. Yet, just as Advent calls us to center our hearts on the love and grace of God, this time of personal preparation has reminded me to stay grounded in what is most important: the love at the heart of it all.

Balancing the busyness of this season with its sacred invitation has been a meaningful challenge. How do we hold the tension between the hustle and the holy? Perhaps it is by making space for reflection amid the whirlwind, seeking God's presence in both the quiet and the chaos, and remembering that perfection isn't the goal—presence is. Whether it's a beautifully set table for a holiday feast or the glow of candlelight during worship, the essence of Advent lies in the gift of God with us, Emmanuel.

As part of this journey, I am excited to share the details of my upcoming wedding with all of you, my church family. My fiancé, Kyle and I will exchange our vows on January 4, 2025, at St. James United Church. The ceremony will take place at 4:00 p.m. We would be delighted to welcome you to join us for this next step in our journey.

As we light the Advent candles this season, may their glow remind us of the hope, peace, joy, and love that shine in every season. Let us take time to reflect, prepare, and celebrate the deep joy of God's love.

With blessings and gratitude,  
Rev. Rebecca



JANUARY 4, 2025  
AT 4:00 PM

ST. JAMES UNITED CHURCH  
330 ELIZABETH AVE.  
ST. JOHN'S, NL

“...and a little child shall lead them.” (Isaiah 11:6b NRSV)

## IN THE BEGINNING...The Story of Gower’s Birthday/Anniversary Celebrations

Written from the ‘memory bank’ of: Erin Dunsmore, Grace Dunsmore and Marion Pardy – Very Rev. Dr. – November 2024

It was 1995. Erin Dunsmore, child of Grace and Doug Dunsmore, was 9 years old. She was a ‘high-spirited’ child, frequently bringing brightness to our office as she waited (sometimes impatiently) for her parents to finish choir practice. Active Erin also found a ‘home’ in the choir room, sanctuary, choir loft, balconies – you name it! She loved talking to people and most of us responded to her with delight, encouragement and patience!

Erin’s 10th birthday was approaching and she felt that a big fuss should be made for her special, double-digit birthday, with Sunday only a day before her special celebration – perhaps for the congregation to sing Happy Birthday to her, even! She was in the choir room ‘bugging’ her parents with this suggestion to have the congregation celebrate her birthday. Her parents explained to her that this ‘highlighting’ of one person on their birthday was not appropriate and told her so! Her minister, the Rev. Marion Pardy, heard about her desire. She wanted Erin to feel special but, at the same time, was aware that there would be other children who would want their birthdays celebrated also.

The Solution: Rev. Pardy created a plan. Each month we will provide opportunity to celebrate the birthdays of all children and adults (and other special occasions, such as anniversaries). We will invite all to celebrate by coming forward, donating 10 cents, at least, for each year, with the money directed to the World Development and Relief Fund of our Church, helping children and adults in need throughout the world. We will sing “Happy Birthday” and also, “The Church is wherever God’s people are helping, caring for neighbours in sickness and need. The church is wherever God’s people are sharing the words of the Bible in gift and in deed.”

Erin was delighted. Erin also connects this ‘celebration’ with the story of the widow’s mite (probably accurate as Marion remembers preaching on the reading in Mark 12: 41-44 and a vague recollection of Erin’s shawl!). The Sunday School dramatized the story with Erin playing the part of the widow. Erin was excited about wearing a blanket as a head shawl and someone holding a microphone to hear the clinking of the coins in the birthday box. She remembers the moral: **They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything – all she had to live on.**

Erin concludes: “I remember feeling very special that my wanting to have my birthday celebrated resulted in a bit of a fuss being made in church – and now as an adult, I am so happy to realize that my sense of self-importance as a child at least led to a long tradition of charity over time!”

And mother, Grace summarizes: “All these years later, we still make contributions for our birthdays and anniversaries – it has become a treasured tradition for our family, extending now to our grandson, Henry, who loves it as well. I’ve often thought back to that time, how Rev. Pardy was able to fulfil a little girl’s wish and create a lovely tradition for everyone in the church – and generate a bit of money for World Development and Relief.”

Indeed, at Advent/Christmas and always, “...and a little child shall lead them.

# Congratulations and Best Wishes

Submitted by Marie-Beth Wright



On Saturday, September 28, 2024, Gower Street United Church hosted the wedding ceremony of Shawna Renée Hudson and Geoffrey Martin Wright at 1:30 p.m. Shawna is the daughter of Debbie and Robert Hudson, formerly of George Street United, while Geoff is a Gower member from the Wright family.

The bride entered the church from the sounds of a harp serenade by Vanessa Goodyear and left to the stirring sounds of Carl Goulding's rendition of the traditional Wedding March.

The beautiful ceremony was performed by Gower Minister, Rev Pamela Jones-Fitzgerald. Witnesses to the signing of the register were: Ashley Drover and Jordan Wright



# Food for the Body, Food for the Mind, Food With Dignity For All Through a Guaranteed Livable Income (GLI)

Submitted by JoAnna Bennett, Gower GLI Interest Group

Many people gathered on Sunday, October 20th at Gower Street United, for a Pulpit Exchange, 'worship, lunch and learn' with St. James United, coordinated by the Very Rev. Dr. Marion Parady and other members of the Gower GLI Interest Group (JoAnna Bennett, Lorne LeDrew, Deborah Rehner) with JoAnna Bennett as Coordinator of the luncheon.

This event was part of a larger plan of our United Church GLI Atlantic Region Coordinators (Rose-Hannah Gaskin, is Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters; Karen and Hal Llewellyn, Nova Scotia/Bermuda; Marion Parady, First Dawn Eastern Edge). Their plan of action was to recruit a total of 12 communities of faith to engage in learning more about a Guaranteed Livable Income and acting accordingly. In our province, Northwest River, St. James and Gower Street United Churches responded.

As St. James welcomed the Very Rev. Dr. Marion Parady and Deputy Mayor, Sheilagh O'Leary, Gower welcomed the Rev. James Ravenscroft and Josh Smee, CEO of Food Security NL and 'champion', together with the Deputy Mayor for a Guaranteed Livable Income.

Following the service officiated by Rev. James, approximately forty members of the congregation gathered in the Lecture Hall to share "Lunch" before engaging in the "Learn" aspect of this event. Rev. James welcomed everyone and gave an overview of the focus of the session. He then did a warmup exercise to gauge how those in the group might have been affected by poverty. This indicated that very few had NO experience or knowledge, another indicator of how prevalent this issue really is.

Josh then presented a background of Basic Income in NL, generated by a group of community organizations that came together in 2020 to advocate, research and organize about basic income. Their report focused on five key points of the question 'Why a Basic Income (GLI)?'. These include evidence to support GLI related to the following:

- A drastic reduction to poverty and food insecurity,
- Health and mental health impacts,
- Support, with dignity,
- Supporting economic development and entrepreneurship,
- Alignment with the new economy in NL.

He also addressed the cost of this initiative that acknowledges that savings can be achieved especially in health care, housing and interface with the justice system. He also pointed out that Newfoundland is taking a leadership role in establishing a Basic Income that can expect to continue with support from the Health Accord. He concluded that three targeted basic income programs have been launched in this province, a report is due soon from an all-party committee on basic income and a review of income support is in progress.

The group then moved to small table discussions on 2 key issues:

1. What would be the impact of a GLI?
2. What are the Myths around GLI?

These topics generated lots of discussion and were facilitated by drop-in support from Josh.

Rev. James wrapped up the session with a review of these discussions that highlighted the following key points:

- Members of the congregation understand GLI well and many have experience navigating policy processes and the system, an acknowledged asset in moving forward,
- The lack of buy-in from the Prime Minister is a major challenge to moving things forward federally, but there seems to be openings for advocacy in the current political climate,
- There are many interesting opportunities to expand programs and pilots at the local /provincial levels,
- The myth that those on social assistance support are the only ones who “can’t make ends meet” and their support needs to be addressed.

In conclusion, this was a worthwhile exercise that was well attended with lively discussion and overall was helpful to enhance knowledge of the Guaranteed Living Income initiative.



# Support the Benevolent Fund: A Call for Compassion and Generosity

Dear Gower Street Family,

As a community bound by faith, love, and service, we are called not only to worship together but to support and care for one another and our neighbors, especially in times of hardship. Our Benevolent Fund plays a vital role in fulfilling this mission by aiding those in our surrounding community who are facing financial difficulties or personal crisis. Today, we are reaching out to you to ask for your support in replenishing this fund, so that we can continue to be a source of hope and help to those in need.

## **What is the Benevolent Fund?**

The Benevolent Fund is a resource set aside specifically to provide financial assistance to individuals and families in need within our community. Whether it's helping with emergency medical expenses, utility bills, groceries, or other unforeseen hardships, the Benevolent Fund ensures that no one in our community must face their struggles alone. It is our way of extending Jesus' love by meeting practical needs during difficult times.

## **Why is it Important?**

Throughout the year, we receive requests from neighbors and strangers of our community who are facing tough circumstances. From the loss of a job to unexpected medical bills or other personal crisis, the challenges people face can be overwhelming. The Benevolent Fund allows us to respond quickly and compassionately, showing the love of Jesus through tangible support. This fund is also an expression of the church's commitment to be a place of refuge and care for all.

However, the fund can only provide this much-needed assistance if it is adequately supported by the generosity of our congregation. As needs have increased over the past year, we find ourselves in a position where additional donations are essential to ensure we can continue helping those who are struggling and come to our doors.

## **How You Can Help**

We ask that you consider contributing to the Benevolent Fund to help us sustain and grow this critical ministry. Your gift, no matter the size, can make a real difference in the lives of those who need it most. Whether you give a one-time donation or commit to monthly support, your contribution will go directly toward meeting the financial needs of individuals and families within our community. The fund is dispersed at the Ministry Teams' discretion.

### Here are some ways you can give:

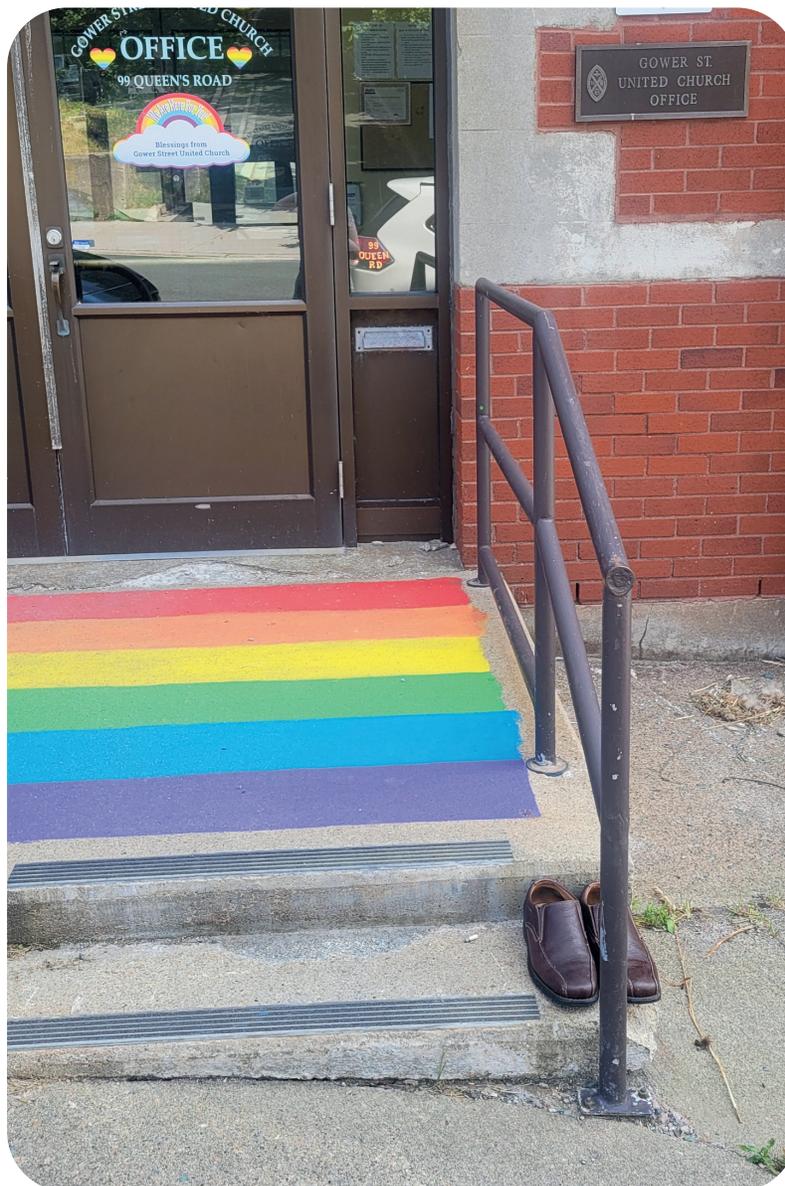
- You can donate by giving in all the various ways online here at Gower.
- An envelope with cash or cheque can be dropped in the offering plate or at the church office.

All these ways can be marked “Benevolent Fund” in the memo line.

We are truly blessed here at Gower to be part of a church family that cares deeply for one another and for our neighbours near and far. By contributing to the Benevolent Fund, you are not just giving money; you are giving hope, encouragement, and the tangible love of Jesus. Let us continue to be a beacon of light to those around us, and together, we can make a real difference in the lives of those in need.

Thank you for your ongoing support and generosity. May God bless you abundantly for your willingness to care for God’s people.

In God’s Service,  
Rev. Pamela





## “On Screen” Downtown Pops Concert

Submitted by David Robbins, Gower Community Band

The Gower Community Band presented its “On Screen” Downtown Pops Concert last Sunday, November 24th, at Gower. This concert supported Bridges to Hope Food Bank and was, by all accounts, a huge success. The music made people laugh and cry, and the video accompaniment was a hit! Equally as important, the event raised \$2,500 for Bridges to Hope.

Thank you to all who participated in this wonderful musical event in support of a most worthy cause.

The GCB will be performing its Christmas Musicale at Gower Street United Church on December 22, 2024.



# Christmas Eve at Gower

## CHRISTMAS EVE AT GOWER

**Worship at 5:30 P.M.**

with communion and special music from Gower Young  
People's Choir, Gower Senior Choir & Gower Handbell Choir

Worship will be in person and livestreamed on YouTube



## Christmas Memorial Donations

If you would like to make a donation in memory or honour of a loved one this Christmas please contact SuAn in the office. These will be reported in our Christmas Eve worship bulletin. Information for memorial donations will need to be received by **4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, December 18, 2024** to be printed in the bulletin.