



The Mustard Seed

December 2024

Newsletter

of

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church

47 McLachlin St. S., Arnprior
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St. John's Lutheran Church Arnprior
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"The Kingdom of Heaven is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field; which indeed is smaller than all seeds. But when it is grown, it is greater than the herbs, and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in its branches." - Matthew 13: 31-32

Message from our Pastor

1 Peter 4:8-10

Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaining. Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.

Dear Friends,

I greet you with thanksgiving that you have asked me to be your pastor, trusting in the work and faith of the shared call committee.

I am looking forward to getting to know you and learning how best to serve. As we begin a new church year, and a time of preparation to receive Christ in new ways, I will simply start at the beginning, and introduce myself.

I was raised in Kitchener, born into a Lutheran home and like many, I left the church for a while before returning as an adult, with adult questions and concerns. I found a congregation where I felt I belonged, which began my journey to ordained ministry.

For most of my career I have served in specialized ministry, as both a prison chaplain and as an administrator for prison chaplaincy. I was a part-time civilian padre at CFB Kingston.

At the same time, I was blessed to have many opportunities to serve various congregations as a part-time interim pastor, parental leave pastor and supply preacher. It was the best of all worlds, offering balance and joy in serving. After I left Corrections Canada, I served both St. Paul's Lutheran and Trinity United Churches in Magnetawan where we learned from one another and began to shape a new shared Christian identity in the village. It was a joy to serve there.

Personally, I am married to Graham (Stratford), a semi-retired computer programmer. We have 3 dogs: Pixie, Rayna and our newest adoptee - Sally. We also have 2 cats, Frankie and Cleo.

Continued—>

Message from our Pastor, Continued

We bought our home in Portage-du-Fort for retirement a couple of years ago, and we were enjoying it as a cottage.

I am looking forward to getting to know you. Don't hesitate to connect as I settle into ministry with you - especially during this time of year where life can get complex. As Peter writes, *"maintain constant love for one another."* This is who we are called to be, together.

It is my hope and prayer that our time of Advent is blessed with wonder and delight in our shared new beginnings!

In service

Pr. Sylvia

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Message from the Chair of Council

GEORGE BAILEY: A toast! A toast to Papa Dollar and to Mama Dollar, and if you want the old Building and Loan to stay in business, you better have a family real quick.

Cousin Tilley: I wish they were rabbits.

GEORGE BAILEY: I wish they were too. Okay, let's put them in the safe and see what happens.

The above dialogue is from the movie "It's a Wonderful Life" – a classic Christmas movie made 78 years ago and is still likely viewed by millions of people every Christmas. In the scenes preceding the dialogue above, there is a bank run on the Bailey Building and Loan, and if they run out of money before closing time, the bank shuts down forever. But as closing time comes and goes, they have two dollars in the till, and that saves the day. The movie still goes on after that, with a few trials and tribulations but (spoiler alert if you have not seen the movie) the dog lives – in other words there is a happy ending.

So, let's do our own movie – small vibrant church, suddenly pandemics and government edicts shutter the doors. But someone smart figures out how to do services online and on YouTube. The pandemic subsides, but the pastor gets ill and retires. There is no ready replacement, but a former pastor can help for a bit of time. Then the son of a former pastor can help on occasion. At times there is simply no pastor available, and lay people step up to lead. There is always support from another church in a neighbouring town.

—-> *Continued*

Message from the Chair of Council, continued

In the background there is a seemingly glacial hunt for a pastor. The Bishop is involved. The Assistant to the Bishop is involved. Forms and documents are filled out. Tick.... Tick.... Tick – the sound of the clock is never ending, and nothing seems to be happening. But the church does not shut down. And there is a lot more than two dollars in the safe.

Suddenly there is a new Pastor! Pastor Sylvia has put in a note elsewhere in this newsletter that is her introduction to us, and her own words are better than anything I can do. It is very fitting that she is jumping on board with us on the first day of Advent.

The other day I had a friendly e-mail from Amazon suggesting that I shop for something to celebrate Advent. Despite my better judgement, I decided to investigate. And like Alice tumbling down into the rabbit hole of Wonderland, I saw many things: Chocolate and Candy Advent Calendars; Lego Advent Calendars; Sock and Underwear Advent Calendars; Tea Bag Advent Calendars; Erotic and Naughty Advent Calendars; National Geographic Advent Calendars; Dinosaur Advent Calendars; Slime Advent Calendars; Dog Advent Calendars (I am not making this up: the dogs get blueberries and smoked salmon, something our black Labrador would certainly agree to). And to top it off, the really good news is that all of this is available at Black Friday discounts, if you act quickly!

So, I guess there is the Advent of Amazon, and the Advent that the church observes beginning the first of December this year, and we have to decide which one we celebrate.

But I am a bit torn. The Amazon Advent has its appeal for sure. And when I think of the church Advent, I think of the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer who said, “Advent creates people, new people”. This sounds like work to me, sounds a little uncomfortable even. But as we emerge out of this long tunnel we have been travelling, into the light of a new year and a new pastor, I am going to give it a shot.

So, thank you Pastor Sylvia for being willing to give us a chance. Thank you to building and grounds maintainers, readers, greeters, counters, altar guild, prayer group, church council members, computer people, youth leaders (and youth), pastoral visitation team, lay leaders, hospitality team. Thank you to those who attend service in person, and those who attend in spirit. Thank you, Pastor Stan and Pastor Michael. Thank you to those that no longer attend but have us in their thoughts. Thank you to those that bless our church by attending Friday Prayers. Thank you to those that are able to assist financially.

I feel very lucky to be trusted as the Chair of Council, and to be able to communicate in this newsletter. The Message from the Chair was an interim project to replace the Message from the Pastor, and I will now step back and put this into the hands of where it should be. Thanks for your indulgence for the last months.

Andy Kalnins

December 2024 Calendar

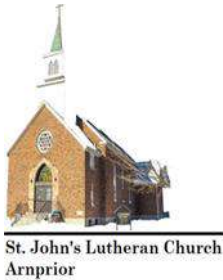
DATE	EVENT
Fridays	1:00-2:00p.m.—Muslim Community—each Friday in the Lounge
Sunday Dec 1 st	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10:30 a.m. — Worship Service with Holy Communion (first Sunday for Pastor Sylvia) Social follows service
Sunday Dec 8 th	10:30 a.m. — Worship Service with Holy Communion
Saturday Dec 14 th	9:00 a.m.—Men's Breakfast at PJ's
Sunday Dec 15 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10:30 a.m. —Worship Service with Holy Communion Social follows service
Monday Dec 16 th	1:00p.m. — Church Council Meets
Sunday Dec 22 nd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10:30 a.m. — Worship Service with Holy Communion 10:30 a.m. Sunday School
Tuesday Dec 24 th Christmas Eve	7:00p.m. — Worship Service — Pageant starts at 7:00pm — Children to arrive by 6:45
Sunday Dec 29 th	10:30 a.m. — Worship Service (Carols & origins of songs)

PRAYER LIST

Please pray for these people in your daily prayers:

From our Congregation: Jaqueline, June, Vicki, Samantha, Pastor Norine, Karen, Mellissa, Gerald and Rachel

Friends: Tere, children Briar and Alivia, George W., Lynne Z., Claude, Roy, John S. and Mary.



Draft Minutes of November 18th, 2024 Council Meeting

Attendance:

Pr. Sylvia Poetschke	Karen Greening	Melissa Watt (regrets)
Andy Kalnins	Debbie Witt	Fred Steinke
Enid Blackwell		

Meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by Andy. Pr. Sylvia opened with a personal introduction and a prayer.

1. **Previous Minutes:** Debbie moved that the October 21, 2024 minutes be accepted as distributed, Seconded by Karen, **CARRIED**.
2. **Ministry Plans for December:** Pastor Sylvia is continuing with the bulletins from St. James until the new year with the lighting of candles for Advent. Christmas eve will be at SJL with children's pageant starting at 7 p.m. We will see if we can get an organist. Since there will be no Christmas Day worship planned, a notice will be put on the doors re: Christmas Day service alternative and invite to next SJL service. Dec. 29 will be carols and origins of songs.
3. **Property:** Fred reported there are now 2 printers on line for printing as well as paper and extra toner have been purchased. Organ tuning is completed, furnace cleaning scheduled for Nov. 19, outside windows have been caulked thanks to Lorne Rueckwald. Work prep for flooring in Pastor's office has been initiated with planned completion the 2nd week of December. (*Editor's note: Late breaking news: completed on Nov 26th*). Snowblower is now in the shed and the lawnmower is stored at the Steinke farm thanks to Fred.
4. **Health & Safety:** Andy will put in a gentle reminder in the newsletter reminding everyone to use hand sanitizer and to stay home if you are sick.
5. **Pastoral Care:** We will have Christmas baskets ready in December for shut-ins and Pr. Sylvia will come to meet these people and will offer communion. Date to be determined.
6. **Finances including Appeal Letter:** Commitments received to date \$69,865. Oct. received \$6,067. We are presently short \$6,266 of being on target with total annual commitments budget of \$91,000. Dance is a slight increase. Pastoral Ministry \$25,960 to end of Oct; remains under budget. Andy will make up an appeal letter with suggestions from Pr. Sylvia. There was some discussion of 2025 plans/needs in varied ministry areas, as a preliminary to developing draft 1 of next year's budget. Enid motioned that the January to October financial report be accepted as presented. Fred seconded, **CARRIED**
7. **Youth:** A float for the Santa Claus Parade on November 23 was decorated and prepared on November 17 by children and volunteers.
8. **Outreach:** Karen and Jeff are looking at something for Spring. Angel tree will be for Teachers Against Poverty (TAP).

Close of Meeting: Next meeting: Monday, December 16, 2024, 1:00 p.m.

Pastor Sylvia ended with a prayer.

Youth Activities Celebrating Christmas



St. John's float was once again in the Arnprior Santa Claus parade. The theme was "Christmas Begins with Christ". Ryan was the master designer and he drove the truck pulling the float. Riding on and walking with the float were Joseph and Mary, 3 angels, 4 shepherds and 4 Kings handing out candy. Sorry Jeff, no children were interested in dressing as sheep this year but we did have some animal participation as you'll see below. Thanks for everyone who helped with the float!



Kings on the right.



Jesus got into the parade on St. John's float!



Kings on the left, handing out candy.



Animals were a big hit with the kids.



December's Sunday School will be on December 22, led by Ryan; Theme is ... wait for it Christmas!

And our pageant during the start of the Christmas Eve service is back! We'll dress any children attending who want to join in - they need to be at the church no later than 6:45.

A Gift

St. John's was recently given a special gift by long-time member Eric Obst, a print of a painting by Leland Bell, renowned Anishnaabe artist, called 'The Feast'.

And the story behind this gift is another gift: Jane Theaker (former dear SJL member and caring nurse to many, now gone) gave this to Eric to thank him for the help he and Lois

gave at a time when she needed to move home a few times in a brief period. Lois and Eric were her moving company!

The Feast is Bell's painting of the Last Supper, and it is based upon the circle, central to indigenous tradition, and important in all his paintings. He writes:

"The rounded lines are deliberate, . . . what I create is something simple and serene and peaceful. . . In this painting, I put Jesus, holding the cup of wine (in our tradition it would be water, the life blood of the earth) facing east, where the creator resides. . . Jesus is bringing healing to the people. He is offering life. . .to everyone in the circle.

. . . The people at the feast are sitting in a circle. They are talking about life . . .language has a power of its own; of how important it is to communicate. There is energy coming out of every person . . .Language is alive."

Council is thinking of placing this gift, with some commemorative ceremony, in the narthex, our entrance to the sanctuary.

We invite you to think of where it may best be placed there, along with some descriptive words. Your ideas are welcome, another gift! Bring them to Pastor Sylvia or Andy Kalnins.



Kudos To Outreach Team and Their Volunteers!



On October 25, St. John's hosted a very successful community spaghetti supper which raised over \$1,200 for NeighbourLink Fountain, all on a 'pay what you wish' basis.

Since then, guests from other churches, and Muslim and community friends who attended, have expressed their appreciation for this gathering, and the care and attention shown by Outreach and fellow supporters. As one person commented, this was so well organized, the production line and everything worked so smoothly. Another did not have sufficient hands for all the good food, and a server said 'don't worry', and proceeded to fill a side plate and deliver it personally. Cookies were also praised.

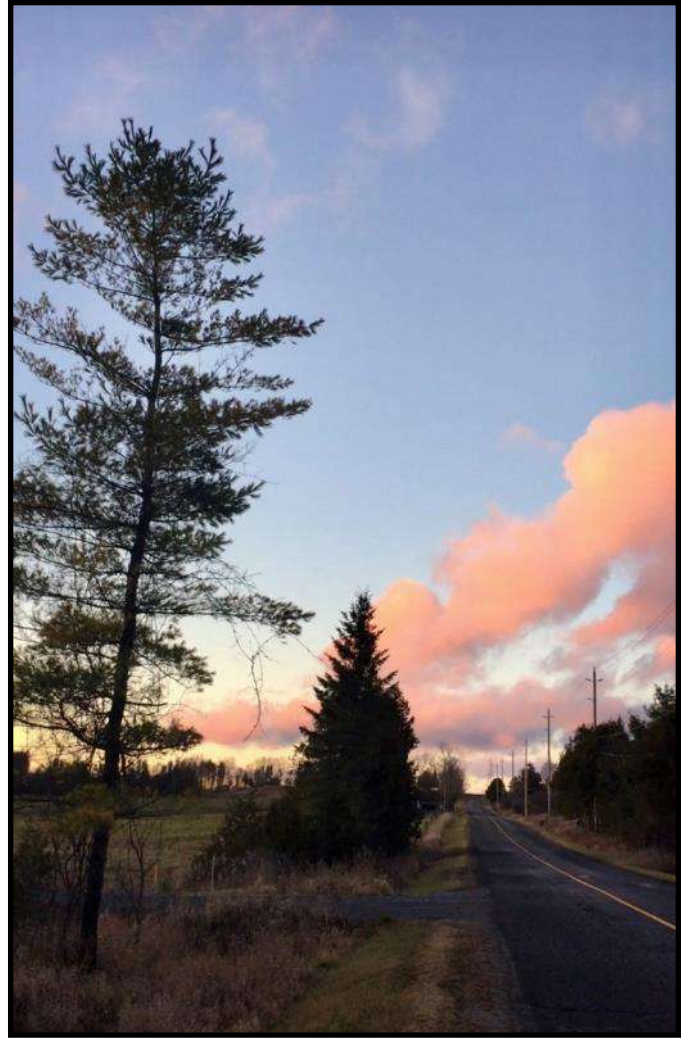
Small touches, good attention- but it meant a lot! A caring event and ministry welcoming 'others' for the benefit of more 'others'. Thank you!



All Saints Sunday, Nov 3. Loved ones remembered



Cory chatting with his neighbour, Katie Clattenburg, our guest speaker about TAP



November skies



Debbie Kargus, Enid Blackwell, and Jeff Kargus representing the Arnprior and District Food Bank at the White Lake Christmas Parade on November 29th, 2024



We said thanks to Pastor Michael on November 17th, his last date with us.



Sort of what it was like after our organ was tuned.

A man, worked all his life, had saved all of his money, but was a real miser when it came to his money. Just before he died, he said to his wife... *"When I die, I want you to take all my money and put it in the casket with me. I want to take my money to the afterlife with me."*

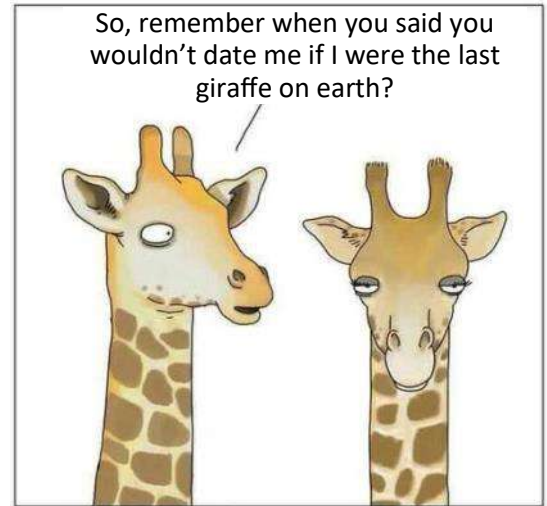
And so he got his wife to promise him, with all of her heart, that when he died, she would put the money into the casket with him.

Well, he died. He was stretched out in the casket, and his wife was sitting there - dressed in black, with her friend. When they finished the ceremony, and just before the undertakers got ready to close the casket, the wife said, *"Wait just a moment!"*

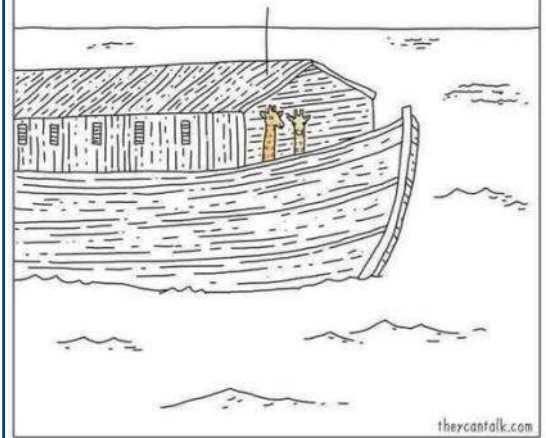
She had a small metal box with her; she came over with the box and put it in the casket. Her friend said, *"Girl, I know you were not foolish enough to put all that money in there with your husband."*

The loyal wife replied, *"Listen, I'm a Christian; I cannot go back on my word. I promised him that I was going to put that money into the casket with him."*

"You mean to tell me you put that money in the casket with him!?!?" "I sure did, I got it all together, put it into my account, and wrote him a cheque..... If he can cash it, then he can spend it."



That was a joke, right?



December 2024

Anniversaries

December 7th—Stan & Judith Johnstone

December 30th—Dave & Alison Burkett



BIRTHDAYS

December 4th—Kathy Tonkin

December 11th—Gerald Formuziewich

December 25th—Jacob Elliot



VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE

December 2024

DATE	READER	ALTAR	GREETERS	COUNTERS	SOCIAL
Dec 1	Bob Witt	Beryl & Keith	Marion & Elmer	Mel & Marion	Social Andy & Enid
Dec 8	Debbie / Jeff	Beryl & Keith	Marion & Elmer	Mel & Marion	
Dec 15	Karen Greening	Beryl & Keith	Marion & Elmer	Mel & Marion	Social Gerald's Birthday
Dec 22	Mellissa W. fam or Jessica Z fam	Beryl & Keith	Marion & Elmer	Mel & Marion	
Dec 24	Andy Kalnins	Beryl & Keith	Beryl & Keith or Marion & Elmer	Mel & Marion	
Dec 29	Cathy Zimmerling	Beryl & Keith	Marion & Elmer	Mel & Marion	



Now that Respiratory Virus season is here, everyone is reminded to stay away from others if you are symptomatic, and sanitize often.



The Prayer Jar in the Narthex

This jar is a confidential place to list your prayer concerns and put them in the jar. NO ONE will be reading these at all. The Prayer Team simply raises up the contents in prayer without knowing what is requested on the notes.

Please feel free to add yours at any time, using the post it notes on the narthex table.