

November 16, 2021

Friends in Christ,

Grace and peace to all of you as we once again approach the beginning of a new Church Year.

In just under 2 weeks Advent will begin again. As a community of faith we once again start to prepare for the birth of a child in a stable, a birth proclaimed by angels visiting shepherds, a child who will change the world. As Advent nears I thought I would take some time to share with you all some information about our plans for the Advent and Christmas seasons.

Here at St. Paul's it is customary that we have a special Outreach campaign during Advent. We have been in contact with our partner agencies regarding their needs and this is what we will be collecting this year:

- The Salvation Army has said that the most useful gift for them is cash so we will be writing a cheque out of the Outreach Fund. Donations to help build the fund up to cover this gift are appreciated.
- The St. Lawrence Centre shares that they are in need of: Gloves, Socks, Handwarmers, and Hygiene products for men and women
- The Elders Caring Shelter is looking for large boxes of breakfast cereal and other non-perishable food
- We have heard of a need for diapers of all sizes (from newborn on up) so there will be a box for those and we will pass them on,
- We will evaluate the balance in the Outreach Fund and may make financial donations to both the Elders Caring Shelter and St. Lawrence Centre as well

As is our practice we will have boxes in the Narthex to collect goods starting on the first Sunday of Advent, November 28th.

At our last meeting of the Worship Ministry Team we talked about worship plans (imagine that! Talking about worship at Worship Team meetings!). One decision that we made is that for the next year we will try out a Women's Lectionary. This will give us a chance to hear some different stories from Scripture, or to hear familiar stories from a different viewpoint. As a part of this we will be using translations of the Scripture readings where choices have been made to be intentionally more inclusive. We will start this with Advent, which means that throughout Advent we will hear stories of promise and births from the Jewish Scriptures.

Over the last few years we have had a practice of a Memory Tree, where we hang names of those we remember at Christmas. Without having a Blue Christmas service this has been our way to mark the "blueness" of the Christmas season. This year we will include the hanging of our memories on the 1st Sunday of Advent and invite folk to add names throughout the season. If you are currently attending worship online and wish to have a name added to the tree just let the office know and we will make it happen.

One of the features of worship in Advent is the lighting of the Advent candles. Traditionally this has been done by having various families or other groups light the candles in worship. As we are still living with the Covid-19 Pandemic and our worship numbers remain low I have been pondering how we can get more people

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involved in our worship services. I am looking for volunteers to record themselves sharing the candle-lighting liturgy which we would then include in worship that Sunday. If your family or group of friends are interested please let me know.

Back in October I had people with whom I share a house start to ask how we would be doing worship on Christmas Eve this year. {It is possible that some of those questions came with a clear opinion about what we should not do.} Here is what we decided at that meeting on November 4th. We will have one service on Christmas Eve, at 8:00. While capacity limits might change at any time, currently worship services are limited to 1/3 of fire capacity which gives us a limit of about 130 people (my interpretation is that this number includes those who are involved in leadership and technical support for the service). This means that we will need people to pre-book their seats for the Christmas Eve service. To facilitate spacing we will be assigning seats. Please contact Carla in the office by December 17th to say that you will be attending on Christmas Eve. Of course the service will also be livestreamed on our YouTube channel

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-aWw0Tc165vh6Epdr-Xbxw>, as are our regular Sunday services.

Soon Alison and I will start to work out the details of what the Christmas Eve service will look like and as we come up with ways people can take part in the service (either in person or by video) we will let you know. One thing we did last year that I want to do again is a video of Christmas greetings. Due to the ongoing pandemic it is still a challenge to greet each other in person so I invite folk to send a picture or short video clip with a Christmas greeting to me at gwaldie@stpaulsuc.ca and I will stitch them together into a video for inclusion on Christmas Eve. I would like to have those by December 17th as well.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the financial realities of our life together. We continue to struggle to meet our budget. So I ask each of us to consider how we might be able to offer financial support to St. Paul's this year. Donations can be dropped off at the church during office hours, or they can be brought on a Sunday morning, or a cheque in the mail always works. For electronic giving you can give through CanadaHelps (<https://www.canadahelps.org/en/dn/36020>) or through an e-transfer using secretary@stpaulsuc.ca as the receiving e-mail. E-transfer might be preferable as there is no service charge paid by St. Paul's for that. An ongoing option is to get set up on, or adjust your current, PAR. Contact Carla if you want information about PAR.

Life in the era of Covid-19 continues to be challenging. Many of us are finding that our stress is higher and our patience is shorter. But we can take some comfort in the reminder that, as the New Creed tells us, we are not alone. God is with us. In just over a month we will again hear about angels and shepherds and a child in a manger. The Word-Become-Flesh will be born into the world again. God is at work within, around, and among us. And that is a good thing.

God be with you. Be blessed and be a blessing this Advent

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gwaldie", is placed on a light yellow rectangular background.