

ADORE HIM

December January 2024/25



SA ST. ANDREW'S
GROWING. LIFE. TOGETHER. WITH GOD

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Letter from the Minister

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During Advent and Christmas, we celebrate how heaven and earth join hands. The promise of God's presence on earth born in a stable, challenges us to look at unremarkable situations for "glory" taking human flesh time after time.

I remember reading that "God never takes a room at the Ritz." It reminds me to look for humble circumstances where the glimmer of God's glory peeks.

As we enter Advent, we ponder with Mary the visit of the shepherds witnessing to angels singing, and God's glory shining amid curious sheep. Humanity and divinity join together, pondering ordinary life in the mud of suffering and the grime of politics, and we ask "Where is God in this?" The promise is still being revealed – the "already" and the "not yet" – Christ is born – our God with us.

When we connect our story with the Christ story, our living takes on a higher meaning for us, and for those whom we connect with. In asking that question, "Where is God in this?" the assumption is that God is present – and we desire the eyes to see. In asking the question, we shift the cosmos and God is glorified. This glory ripples through all of creation. Is this overstated? Perhaps. But God works through small things, weak and humble things, like a baby in a stable. When we connect our story with the Christ story, it's like putting on a pair of glasses that clarifies our vision or asking a question to ponder – "Where is God in ...?"

May you experience God's glory in this season in the least expected ways!

With peace and blessing – *Rev. Laurie*

The **GLORY** *of* **GOD**

A prayer for Christmas Preparations - By Joel Mason

Lord Jesus,

Master of both the light and the darkness,

Send Your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for Christmas.

We who have so much to do seek quiet spaces to hear Your voice each day.

We who are anxious over many things look forward to Your coming among us.

We who are blessed in so many ways

long for the complete joy of Your kin-dom.

We whose hearts are heavy, seek the joy of Your presence.

We are Your people, walking in darkness, yet seeking the light.

To You we say, "Come Lord Jesus!" Amen.



Session Highlights for November 2024

- Session and the Legacy Team have approved 4 new applications for funds:
 - ◊ Pilot project to provide a hot meal (soup and bun) to the Aboriginal Friendship Center once a month (at least in cold weather)
 - ◊ Recovery Bibles for a Bible Study for those recovering from addictions. Two people from our congregation have volunteered to lead this study.
 - ◊ Materials to build a wheelchair ramp for someone in the congregation.
 - ◊ New cupboards to be built in the Upper Room.
- Many thanks to Maryanne Quesnel and Derek Wilkinson for serving on the Legacy Team, as they are retiring at the end of 2024. Many thanks to Willem Van der Merwe and Wendy McNaughton who have agreed to serve on the Legacy Team starting in 2025.
- A team mandate was approved for the Rainbow Team:
 - ◊ St. Andrew's is committed to being an affirming congregation which publicly, intentionally and explicitly welcomes 2SLGBTQIA+ (*Two Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual*) persons to full participation in the life of our faith community. St. Andrew's affirms that gender and sexuality are gifts of God, and that people of all sexual orientations and gender identities truly belong as full members in leadership and the life of the church community.
 - ◊ The primary goal of the Rainbow Team is to facilitate, encourage and support the congregation's commitment to diversity and inclusion in an intentional way.
 - ◊ The Rainbow Team will explore and implement various ideas, initiatives and opportunities designed to communicate this commitment within and to our wider community. The Rainbow Team will seek to provide ongoing educational opportunities and action initiatives in furtherance of St. Andrew's stated position of inclusivity.
- The Life after Loss Team will be holding a *Surviving the Holidays* event on Saturday, December 7 at 10:00 am in the KE Lounge. If you (and anyone you know) will be finding the holidays a difficult time this year, please come on Dec 7.
- Daryl George, our Building Custodian, has successfully completed his 3 month probationary period.
- The City of Calgary has approved the permit application for our digital sign, and they now have to advertise this for 21 days before final permission is granted. The order for the digital boards has been placed. Things are moving forward (if slowly).
- Session does not meet in December, but wishes to take this time to wish all of our church family a blessed Christmas, and a safe and happy New Year.

Debby Dorcas - Clerk of Session



Christmas Together

Advent & Christmas 2024 - ALL are welcome

Dec 1 Morning Worship 10:00 am

Advent 1: HOPE - Be a Sign! - Rev. Laurie McKay

Dec 8 Morning Worship 10:00 am

Advent 2: PEACE - Preparing the Path for the Lord - Rev. Laurie McKay

Dec 15 Morning Worship 10:00 am

Advent 3: JOY - Intergenerational Musical - Uncertain Poor Shepherds

Dec 22 Morning Worship 10:00 am

Advent 4: LOVE - Lessons and Carols - Rev. Laurie McKay

Dec 24 Christmas Eve Services 4:00 & 7:00 pm

Worship Leaders: Rev. Laurie McKay & Rev. Geoffrey Simmins

Children/Family Service 4:00 pm

Fun Mission Project for children & youth, Carol Sing for adults in the Foyer, children (and adults!) choose costumes for the Pageant, children choose musical instruments for the service, ALL join in the Sanctuary at 4:30 for a Family Christmas Pageant Service

Christmas Eve - Candlelight Service 7:00 pm

Ponderings of Your Heart

Dec 25 Christmas Day Service (YouTube - anytime):

Rev. Laurie and Evan have created a shorter Christmas Day service you can view ANYTIME on or after Christmas Day, on our YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@StACalgary>



Elder Profile - Lynn Judd

Coming from Ontario in 1984, Lynn and Bill joined St. Andrew's in early 1985 with their young children. Lynn says she and Bill joined the choir before becoming a member of the church. Karl English was the minister at that time and Lynn remembers talking to Alex Grant on their first visit, he was always welcoming!

As we all know, Lynn is very gifted musically. She has been singing since she was five years old and has always been in at least one choir.

Ordained as an elder in 1989, she is one of our longest serving session members. Although Lynn was busy working full-time and raising three children during her early days at St. Andrew's, she still found time to contribute.

Lynn taught nursing and oversaw the development of the Mount Royal University Bachelor of Nursing program alongside MRU degree granting status. She gained experience with strategic planning and human resources during her many years at MRU.

Lynn is presently the Session Presbytery Representative for St. Andrew's. She also serves on teams providing ministerial support at our church and the Presbytery. She was a member of the Revision and Renewal team that helped draft the St. Andrew's vision and mission statements.

Over the time Lynn has been involved at St Andrew's, there have been changes and challenges. However, she is quick to point out that our congregation kept moving forward, learned and adapted from each new challenge.

Lynn is excited about our dynamic and energetic ministerial team. She is pleased to see new people in the congregation contributing fresh energy and enthusiasm for programs that reflect our mission of being 'woven into the neighbourhood' – such as The Edge and Indigenous Friendship activities. She hopes that we will continue to engage with each other as we build relationships inside and outside the church and that individually and collectively we will use our gifts to continue to support the work of St Andrew's.

Lynn sees great opportunities ahead for St. Andrew's!

Thanks Lynn for all your contributions!

Submitted by David Townsend



Faith Formation Update

by Rhonda Wishart, Inge Murray, Debby Dorcas, Lauren & Matt Nolette, and Lorna Andronikou

Church school will be operating throughout the Christmas/New Year season with classes on December 22, 29 and January 5.

TAKE150

Thank you to everyone who attended and supported TAKE150 on October 26! We had 18 kids in attendance, and we had so many helpers putting in hard work to pull off another successful evening! Inge led the organization of the evening with Josh, Kaitlyn, Ceana, Anneke, Shona, Carl and Craig as helpers. Debbie and Paul brought fabulous Halloween themed food.





Adult Bible Study

The group is now following a 6-week study, "Context" by Josh Scott, highlighting the context of certain scriptures and how the original context leads to some misinterpretation in today's world. Bill Judd continues to lead this group. They meet after church service in Trinity Hall.

Mitten Tree

This year's Mitten Tree will be in place for the December 15th Sunday service when the children will gather the hats and mittens from the congregation to decorate the tree with these items. Please bring in hats, mittens, scarves, etc. on December 15! The collected items will go to the Indigenous Friendship Centre.

Intergenerational Musical

Back by popular demand, the Intergenerational Musical led by Debby Dorcas, will be held Sunday, December 15 during the service. This year's performance is called, "Uncertain Poor Shepherds." All are welcome to participate. Please reach out to Debby if you are interested in joining the group. They will have a rehearsal on Saturday, December 14. You will be provided with practice tracks to listen and learn at home!





Patricia Dutcher-Walls | PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CANADA

THE APOLOGY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA

Introduction

We, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, humbly offer this apology to the generations of Indigenous people and communities harmed by the residential schools and day schools we operated.

We originally made a Confession in 1994 for our role in operating residential schools and colonization but we have realized the inadequacy of that Confession. We apologize for our slowness and the apathy of our response. We are deeply sorry.

We acknowledge the families whose children were taken to schools without telling their families where the children were being taken and who never returned, who remain lost today. We acknowledge with grief the many unmarked graves that have been found and will be found, including at schools that we ran. We remember the children who never made it home.

We apologize for the impact of the genocide of colonization, forced assimilation and racism to which we actively contributed.

Many Survivors and intergenerational Survivors have shared very personal and traumatic experiences in the context of Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings and within the congregations, committees and governing bodies of the church. We acknowledge the strength and courage of Survivors for sharing your experiences in the schools and the heavy burdens you, your families and communities still bear. We acknowledge the pain and difficulty of sharing and reliving the truth of your lived experience.

We acknowledge that the church's apology itself, as well as the presence of church representatives making the apology, may be triggering, evoking trauma for some by surfacing memories of devastating experiences in residential schools.

Apology

We acknowledge that Indigenous children suffered at residential schools.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada ran Ahousaht Residential School in British Columbia, Alberni Residential School in British Columbia, Birtle Residential School in Manitoba, Cecilia Jeffrey Residential School in Shoal Lake, Ontario, Cecilia Jeffrey Residential School in Kenora, Ontario, Crowstand Residential School in Saskatchewan, File Hills Residential School in Saskatchewan, Muscowpetung (later known as “Lakesend”) Residential School in Saskatchewan, Portage la Prairie Residential School in Manitoba, Regina Industrial School in Saskatchewan, Round Lake Residential School in Saskatchewan and Stoney Plain Residential School in Alberta.

We apologize for taking children from their homes, parents, grandparents and communities.

We apologize for traumatizing parents and communities and taking away their rights to protect their children.

We honour and respect the languages of the land and apologize for punishing Indigenous students for speaking their traditional languages.

We apologize for attempting to eliminate Indigenous identity and Cultural and Spiritual traditions.

We apologize for the abuse Indigenous children suffered, including physical, sexual, psychological, emotional and Spiritual abuses.

We apologize for the weaponization of food that happened in the schools and for non-consensual experiments with food, nutrition and medical procedures that were conducted on children.

We apologize for the lost lives, for children who died while at residential schools – from disease, neglect, suicide, attempts to run away and from violence by teachers, staff and volunteers.

We apologize that the schools created an isolated and unsafe environment where violence was condoned and students learned violence. We regret, and are deeply sorry, that we provided conditions where students could abuse other students.

We acknowledge and apologize for the resulting loss of bloodlines, of ancestors and of people who would not grow to become Elders, the huge loss of culture and future for nations this meant.

We apologize that when children died their parents were not always informed, they were not always returned to their communities and their burial sites were sometimes unmarked or the markers were not maintained and the record of names was not kept.

We apologize for the church’s attitude of white superiority, for its assimilating policies and practices, for the racism of treating Indigenous people as less than human and for the ongoing intergenerational effects of our complicity with colonization and the schools that continue to negatively impact families and communities.

We acknowledge that this systemic racism continues to impact Indigenous people, including through: insecure housing; poverty; forced dependence on social assistance; experiencing lateral and domestic violence, in particular toward Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQ people as named in the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. We acknowledge this has led to hopelessness, mental health crises and the tragedy of suicide, barriers to completing education and to accessing health care. We acknowledge this has led to the breakdown of family bonds that results in children taken into foster care, gang involvement, exploitation, addictions and incarceration.

We are sorry for how long it has taken for The Presbyterian Church in Canada to begin to understand the depth of harm we have caused, and we still have much to learn.

For our complicity in colonization and the residential school system, we are deeply, deeply sorry.

We therefore offer five fundamental commitments:

1. We will continue to listen and learn from Indigenous people, leaders, Elders and Knowledge Keepers, welcoming and engaging voices from both within and beyond The Presbyterian Church in Canada.
2. We will continue the work of reconciliation, responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action and the work of reparation that we have begun.
3. We will respect traditional Indigenous spiritual practices.
4. We will listen to and tell the truth about the past.
5. We will work to support Indigenous-led healing and wellness initiatives and be in solidarity with Indigenous people and communities.



On Friday, October 18th, 24 adults from St. Andrew's gathered in the Karl English Lounge for a film night and conversation hosted by St. Andrew's Rainbow Team. Together we watched the documentary "Fish Out of Water" (2009) by Ky Dickens.

The filmmaker identified how the misinterpretation of a handful of Bible passages has deeply hurt the LGBTQIA community, making Ky feel like "a fish out of water" when she came out within her faith community.

The conversation after the film raised important questions about how to speak with others about the biblical interpretations that have been harmful to the LGBTQIA (lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgendered, intersex and allies) community. Stay tuned for a follow-up article about this subject in the coming months! In response to the group's desire for continued education, you will also find Lynn Judd's article on pronouns in this edition of ConnXions.

The Rainbow Team continues to prayerfully consider further learning opportunities for the congregation as we continue Growing Life Together with God.

Submitted by Rainbow Team member Deanne Barrett she/her.

A Primer for Pronouns & Gender Terminology

Issues of equality and acceptance are important for us to understand as a welcoming community of faith. We want to communicate respectfully with one another as we seek to foster an inclusive and safe environment for all but particularly transgender and non-binary people.

As we seek to engage with everyone in our midst as Jesus would have us do, there are words, ideas and identities that may be new and confusing to many of us. Here is some information that we hope will increase your awareness and understanding.

Pronouns, why are they important?

We may be unfamiliar with the word “pronoun,” but we use them all the time. Pronouns are basically how we identify ourselves apart from our name. It's how someone refers to you in conversation. In English, our most commonly used pronouns (he/she) specifically refer to a person's gender.

Proper use of gender identity terms, including pronouns, is a crucial way to signal courtesy and acceptance, and is just as important as pronouncing someone's name correctly. For queer, gender non-conforming, non-binary, and transgender people, these pronouns may not fit, can create discomfort, and can cause stress and anxiety. Using their preferred pronouns is a simple way of referring to them that affirms their identity and is consistent and true to who they are.

Knowing each other's pronouns helps you be sure you have accurate information about another person. It can be an indication that you understand that gender expression does not equal gender identity and that you're not judging people just based on the way they look and making assumptions about their gender beyond what you actually know about them.



SHE
HE
THEY
THEM
**UNDERSTANDING
GENDER IDENTITY**



What's the right way to find out a person's pronouns?

Start by giving your own – for example: “My pronouns are _____”. If introducing yourself to someone, you would say, “I’m _____”. I use _____ pronouns. What about you?”

It may feel awkward at first, but eventually it just becomes another one of those get-to-know-you questions and it can become routine.

The practice of adding pronouns to email, text, social media, etc is an effective reference point especially when names are less common or gender ambiguous.

The most common pronouns you are likely to encounter are:

He/him (singular, usually masculine specific)

She/her (singular, usually feminine specific)

They/them (singular, most common gender nonspecific term)

What if I make a mistake and misgender someone, or use the wrong words?

Simply apologize and move on. That simple gesture of apologizing quickly and moving on shows the other person that you care.

The best approach is to listen to how people refer to themselves.

Gender identity terms (Western centric)

What does **2SLGBTQI+** stand for?

2S - at the front, recognizes Two Spirit people as the first 2SLGBTQI+ communities

L - lesbian

G - gay

B -bisexual

T- transgender

Q- queer

I-intersex- considers sex characteristics beyond sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression

+ – people who identify as part of sexual and gender diverse communities who use additional terminologies (Gov't of Canada)

Sex refers to a person's biological status and is typically assigned at birth, usually on the basis of external anatomy. Sex is typically categorized as male, female or intersex.

Gender is often defined as a social construct of norms, behaviors and roles that varies between societies and over time. Gender is often categorized as male, female or non-binary.

Gender identity is one's own internal sense of self and gender, whether that is man, woman, neither or both. Unlike gender expression, gender identity is not outwardly visible to others.

For most people, gender identity aligns with the sex assigned at birth. For transgender people, gender identity differs in varying degrees from the sex assigned at birth.

Gender expression is how a person presents gender outwardly, through behavior, clothing, voice or other perceived characteristics. Society identifies these cues as masculine or feminine, although what is considered masculine or feminine changes over time and varies by culture.

-Cisgender, or simply **cis**, is an adjective that describes a person whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth.

-Transgender, or simply **trans**, is an adjective used to describe someone whose gender identity differs from the sex assigned at birth. A transgender man, for example, is someone who was listed as female at birth but whose gender identity is male.

Cisgender and transgender have their origins in Latin-derived prefixes of "cis" and "trans" — cis, meaning "on this side of" and trans, meaning "across from" or "on the other side of." Both adjectives are used to describe experiences of someone's gender identity.

Nonbinary is a term that can be used by people who do not describe themselves or their genders as fitting into the categories of man or woman. A range of terms are used to refer to these experiences; nonbinary and genderqueer are among the terms that are sometimes used.

Of note: Some of the terms now in common usage are different from those used in the past to describe similar ideas, identities and experiences. Some people may continue to use terms that are less common, and some people may use different terms entirely to express themselves. What's important is recognizing and respecting people as individuals.

References

<https://www.npr.org/2021/06/02/996319297/gender-identity-pronouns-expression-guide-lgbtq>

<https://glaad.org/>

<https://lgbtlifecenter.org/pronouns/>

<https://www.gsrc.princeton.edu/understanding-pronoun-use> (gender sexuality research center)

<https://www.uwindsor.ca/provost/415/understanding-pronouns>

Written by Lynn Judd on behalf of the Rainbow Team



STEWARDSHIP

A Kaleidoscope of
LOVE

Stewardship Kaleidoscope is an annual conference held by The Presbyterian Church (PCUSA) and the Lutheran Church, with the purpose of exploring stewardship and igniting creativity to foster generosity for God's mission. This past September, we attended the conference in Portland, Oregon, thanks to the generosity of St. Andrew's Church and The Presbyterian Church in Canada. We had the chance to learn from the many plenary seminars, workshops and worship opportunities. We were part of a larger group of ministers and lay leaders from across Canada also representing The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

As our own Gratitude & Generosity Team has been focused on stewarding our time, talent and treasure, this too was a focus of the conference. All equal parts, we learned about inspiring generosity of all resources God has entrusted to us, our church and our community. A common theme throughout was to focus on our MISSION. How our mission impacts our community will inspire people to give and participate fully in our faith community and our mission, as laid out in our strategic plan. There were many inspiring stories of churches truly embedded in the community, working with unhoused and marginalized populations. Church is being done in different and creative ways, reaching people simply where they are.

We learned the importance of having a sense of community and inviting people to belong. We were challenged to let go of what we have and want for ourselves, and to look outward to the needs of our neighbourhood (what they need, not what we think they need), in how we can best serve the communities we are in, and how we can use our buildings in our mission. There were also learning opportunities about narrative budgeting, marketing, trends, and incorporating stewardship into worship. A great mix of workshops equipped us with many tools and ideas for our work in cultivating generosity and responsible stewardship here at home. St. Andrew's is already doing so much of this good work.

With Shona representing the St. Andrew's Finance Team, Stephanie representing the Gratitude & Generosity Team and Dolly as Treasurer, attending Stewardship Kaleidoscope together gave the three of us time to reflect, collaborate and be creative. We spent time discussing and praying about what we learned, how we felt the spirit moved us during our time there, and how we can help further our generosity and mission here at St. Andrew's.

With gratitude,

Dolly Forcade, Shona Vandrascio and Stephanie Werle

Ministry Fair

Thank You!

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who participated in our recent Team Fair at the church. This event was a beautiful celebration of community, collaboration, and service, and it would not have been possible without the dedication and enthusiasm of so many individuals.

To each team that took part—thank you for sharing your time, talents, and passion. Your displays, conversations, and willingness to connect with others highlighted the incredible diversity and strength of our church family. From welcoming new members to showcasing the impact of your work, you reminded us all of the power of serving together in Christ's name.

I am especially grateful to the Welcome and Connection team who worked tirelessly behind the scenes to organize the event, set up the space, and ensure everything ran smoothly. Your commitment allowed this fair to be a meaningful and inspiring experience for everyone who attended.

As we reflect on this wonderful day, we are reminded that the work is not over! The Team Fair was not just a celebration of what has been accomplished but also a call to action for what lies ahead. Together, we have the privilege of continuing to serve Jesus—loving our neighbours, sharing the Gospel, and being God's hands and feet in the world.

Let's carry the energy and spirit of the Team Fair forward as we keep working to build God's Kingdom. Thank you again for your faithfulness and willingness to serve. May God bless us all as we continue this journey together.

With gratitude and hope, Lauren Nolette on behalf of the Welcome and Connection team



Personal Experience at the Tom Baker Cancer Centre

My husband Blaine has completed six weeks of radiation treatments at the Tom Baker. He has a milder form of skin cancer on his temple area.

This was our experience. It was a journey I will never forget.

Upon first walking into the Tom Baker Cancer Centre and being unaware of the exact location of our appointment, a welcoming volunteer staff member approached us to offer assistance. It sure helped to alleviate the apprehension we were feeling! I fondly remember that first day when I was asking about a handicap placard due to Blaine using a walker. I inquired at the Reception Office and the fellow I spoke with, Michael, couldn't have been more helpful in assisting me in this regard. He went out of his way to direct me to the right person. Over the next six weeks we connected on a friendly and personal basis. Michael had a wicked sense of humor and an engaging personality. I felt so privileged in getting to know this wonderful man. I popped in each time we were heading to the elevator, and he always made my day a little brighter with his infectious smile!

In the treatment unit we found a community of souls going through a difficult time in their lives. Blaine and I met such wonderful people in the waiting area. Men and women of all ages were so open about their cancer diagnosis and treatment. We in turn received great support and encouragement from all of them.

We shared contact info with one particular couple as we were coming close to the end of his treatments. We agreed to stay in touch. Strangers had soon become friends. I won't miss traveling back and forth to the Tom Baker but I will miss the camaraderie that occurred under these circumstances.

The compassion and caring we received from the Radiologist Oncologist and incredible staff at the Centre will not be soon forgotten!

There were many "God Moments" and I felt His presence so profoundly. Whatever we are facing in our lives we are Never Alone!

God's Blessings.
Judy McKearney

Share your God Moment



Thank you

The Ladies Guild hosts a beloved annual tradition: the monumental Christmas Market, fondly known as “The Bazaar.” This cherished event features a Tearoom, Bake Table, Second Time Treasures, a Kids’ Room, and a Book and Puzzle Room. None of this would be possible without the incredible love and support of the congregation.

I’ve been involved in more bazaars than I can count. However, this year felt wonderfully different. Alongside our faithful regular volunteers who contribute tirelessly year after year, we were blessed with so many new faces—people who stepped in, eager to take on new tasks and help make this year’s Bazaar such a tremendous success.

This year, we also opened our doors to welcome participants from outside our faith community through the addition of a new Vendors’ Market. This initiative helps us weave deeper connections with our neighborhood, and it was such a joy to see so many fresh faces joining in.

We are truly blessed! We give heartfelt thanks to God for each and every one of you. Through your efforts, we raised over \$12,000 before expenses, which will go toward continuing the important work of this place as We Grow Life Together With God.

Thank you all, and may God bless you!

Submitted by Audrey Cole





PEACE

ON EARTH



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| | |
|------------------------|--|
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