



The Signal



St. Stephen United Church Newsletter
Advent 2008

Friends:

Advent is the season of waiting and preparation for the coming of the salvation of Christ; the season of 'Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love'; the season of 'Light'. The season of Advent has also on occasion been referred to as a 'little lent'; a time when we as Christians subject ourselves to a kind of spiritual examination. In the Gospel of Mark (13: 32-37), Jesus warns us to make certain that we are awake and alert.



This passage gives us a chance to splash a little water on our faces. It gives us the opportunity to make certain that we are wide awake and ready for the Advent, the coming of our Lord.

Watchfulness does not come naturally to us. You may remember how, in the Wizard of Oz, Dorothy and her fellow travelers stray from the yellow brick road and fall into danger among the wild poppies. As she lingers among the beautiful flowers, she very nearly reaches a premature end to her journey home. Unbeknownst to her, the seemingly harmless poppies lull her into a deep and potentially deadly sleep.

Like those poppies, our world is full of attractions and temptations that lull us to sleep and distract us from our spiritual journeys. Not all of the distractions are ugly or obviously evil either. Any number of things can dull and dull our sensibilities to the coming of the Lord into our lives. Over fascination with sports and recreation, business success or our quest for the perfect home life are a few of the many things that can distract our attention away from the Advent of our Lord Jesus. Jesus seems to recognize these dangers. He wants us to stay awake. Take an inventory. Watch how you are spending your money. Watch how you are spending your time. Watch! You don't want to be caught napping.

But then, how can ordinary Christians like us expect to stay away awake and be alert? We all know how easy it is to get caught and lulled to sleep by all the various distractions of our world. What are the chances that we will be awake when the Master returns to us? We need help!

For several years, John worked the night shift on the nursing staff in a local Nursing Home. The shift ran from 11:00 p.m. to 9:00 a.m. and employees were warned against falling asleep, at the cost of losing their jobs. But staying awake when everyone else was asleep was often a real battle, especially after long weekends of late nights or little sleep.

Sometimes John would guzzle cups of coffee and at other times splash his face with cold water. On those nights, he lived in mortal fear of falling asleep only to be awakened by the Supervisor's cold touch and to hear her announce that he would be looking for another job.

Then, one night it happened. John had a particularly exhausting evening and towards five in the morning, try as he might to fight it off, he fell asleep. Some time later, he felt a surge of panic as someone called his name and tapped him on the shoulder. John! Wake up! As he turned to face the supervisor, he saw instead the face of the nurse who worked on the unit down the hall.

'I saw the supervisor's car coming up the driveway' she informed John, 'and I knew how sleepy you were earlier so I came to make sure you were awake. A friend in need... The Good News of the Gospel is that in a similar way, those of us who belong to Christ do not watch alone. Just as in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus still stands beside his drowsy followers. Our spiritual well being does not depend upon fearful, heroic watching. No! Jesus watches with us and for us. He stands ready to wake us up if we become drowsy. And so, we have confidence that we will not be caught sleeping at the crucial moment of our lives, because He watches with us.

Best wishes to you and your family as in the next few weeks you get into the spirit of and the preparation for 'Christmas. Stay alert! Get ready! It comes faster than we think!

You are especially invited to one or both of our two Christmas Eve Services at 5:00 and 11:00 p.m. on the 24th. Come at 10:30 and join in the Carol Sing. Come and wait for Jesus to touch your life and complete your Christmas preparations with us.



Ross

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Notes From Council .....

Since the last time I wrote we've had numerous happenings at St. Stephen. Our minister of the past 13 years, Rev. Dr. Keith Knill retired. We helped him celebrate his retirement with a party attended by over 120 guests and friends, including Father Dave from St. Gabriel's, Sandy Street and Charlene Cheng from the Carpenter Hospice, and musical entertainment provided by our Singing Strings. Numerous gifts and mementoes were presented including an original watercolour rendering of our church by Dorothy Sharpe. Keith concluded with a farewell service at the end of June. Mark Baker was kind enough to record this service and I still have a few copies available.

We are grateful to our own Rev. Rob Dalgleish for his continuing support and filling in for the summer months.

A JNAC (Joint Needs Assessment Committee) was formed, their report issued, presented to the congregation, and now we are in the process of finding a new minister by the newly formed Search Committee.

In the meantime, we welcome Rev. Ross Hibberd to fill in as supply minister until next June. We welcome also Ross' wife Sally and son Paul to St. Stephen.

We all know the problems and inconvenience of the sump pump breakdown in our basement back in the spring. It seemed like it was taking forever to get the basement back in shape and usable. It was because black mold had been discovered and all of the affected areas had to be cleaned, walls ripped out and replace, and the whole area repainted. We then replaced all of the contaminated carpeting with high commercial quality floor vinyl tiles. Fortunately, our insurance covered all of the \$70,000 refurbishment cost less our deductible.

We also had a heaving of our ceramic floor in the narthex. I'm told we had a minor earth tremor, which caused the buckling. With the help of Bruce Paterson, Don Wright and others, the repairs were made at minimum cost versus the possible thousands it would have cost to completely replace all the tiles in the narthex. A big thank you fellows and all the other guys who lended their time.

Back in April, we had Ted Reeve from General Council lead a service arranged by the Outreach and Action Committee. His audio/visual presentation was quite a disappointment and clearly showed how inadequate our equipment was. We have since upgraded our system through funding by the Special Gifts Fund and now are about state of the art. This equipment should really enhance our planned services through the Christmas season and in future.

There has been much, and there is much going on at St. Stephen. I encourage you to keep informed when the Council minutes are posted on the bulletin board after each meeting.

As we enter the cold and flu season, please make liberal use of the hand sanitizers available at each entrance. Let's not let illness spoil our holiday season.

Hope everyone has a safe and great Christmas and New Years.

May God bless you all.

*Lloyd Pong, Council Chair*

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Our Christmas Services

Sunday, Dec. 7th

10:30 a.m. White Gift Service

Sunday, Dec. 14th

10:30 a.m. Worship

Sunday, Dec. 21st

10:30 a.m. Worship

7:30 p.m. Evening Lessons and Carol Service presented by our Senior Choir

Christmas Eve

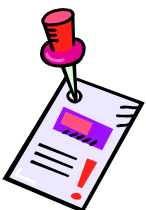
5:00 p.m. Family Service

10:30 p.m. Christmas Caroling and Cider

11:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Candlelight/Communion

Sunday, Dec. 28th

10:30 a.m. Family Carol Service



The Joint Search Committee (JSC) Update.....

Following approval of the Joint Needs Assessment Committee's report, the following people were appointed to the Joint Needs assessment committee at a congregational meeting on October 26, 2008.

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| Paul Bartu (Chair) | Joan Eagle (Recording Secretary) |
| Shirley Bainbridge (Corresponding Secretary) | |
| Heather McGavin | Lesley Wiens |
| Deb Knipe | Jason Bainbridge |
| Penny Edwards | Joan Komer |
| Serry Wiley | |
| Rev. Darrow Woods (Presbytery Rep) | Amber Ing (Presbytery Rep) |

The committee is quite active and energized. Six members attended a workshop on the Joint Search Process at the Hamilton Conference office on Saturday, November 29th. The committee has met on two occasions and two other meetings are scheduled prior to Christmas. An advertisement has been placed in the United Church Observer (*January issue of the magazine and online*). The ad has also been posted on United Online website. The committee has a copy of the National Vacancy List – which includes the names of Ministry Personnel from across Canada. If you know of someone that you feel might be a potential candidate for St. Stephen, please pass the name along to a committee member. The work of this committee is extremely confidential, and we will not be permitted to provide the congregation with any information regarding applicants. The congregation will receive a full report from the committee when a recommendation is made. We appreciate your patience and ask for your prayers as the committee does this important work. A copy of the advertisement is printed below.

The Joint Search Committee

St. Stephen United Church is a welcoming, friendly and inclusive church in north Burlington, Ontario. Burlington is situated in the Golden Horseshoe - on the shores of Lake Ontario, between Hamilton and Toronto. It is within ready access to multiple post-secondary education facilities and within minutes of world class health care. Cultural and recreational facilities abound.

St. Stephen has a congregation of approximately 240 members and adherents with many dedicated lay leaders. We are committed to our children's ministry and music is a varied and key component of our worship. We are actively involved in community outreach and our church hosts many community organizations. We have an inclusive marriage policy.

As a result of the retirement of our minister, we are seeking a full-time ordered Minister. The successful candidate will bring his or her passion to engage the heart, mind and spirit of our church community in worship. He or she will have a strong preaching ability which translates biblical knowledge, theology and personal experiences into a message which is understandable, engaging and inviting to all listeners. As an inter-generational congregation, we are looking for someone who is able to communicate with and engage our children, who appreciates and values pastoral care, and who is able to collaborate with and support lay participation in the life of the church. St. Stephen is looking for a minister who will facilitate and support our outreach both to the community and to the world-wide activities of the United Church.

Mark your calendars.....

.....Look what's coming up!



Candy Cane Kitchen

Saturday, Dec. 6th (9:00 am - 2 pm) Baked goods, deli items, Granny's Cupboard, vintage

Christmas decorations, new toys (with proceeds going to Ronald McDonald House), lunch room. Donations for the bake and deli tables can be dropped off Friday, Dec. 5th after 6:30 pm and if necessary, before 9 am on Saturday. We appreciate your contributions.



Christmas Poinsettias



Envelopes will be available in the pews if you wish to donate a poinsettia in memory of a loved one. Place your donation in the

envelope and place it on the offering plate. The Christmas flowers will adorn the sanctuary for the season.



White Gift Service

Sunday, December 7th, at 10:30 am Please join us as our Sunday school children and teachers present "The Stars That Refused to Go to Bed". As an offering, any items listed on the Wesley Centre suggestion list; canned juice, baby food, cereal, diapers, toy/gift ideas would be most welcome, or a cash donation if you prefer. The need is great and we expect that there will be many families needing support again this Christmas season.



Women's Group Christmas Pot Luck

Tuesday, Dec. 9th at 6:00 pm The men as well as the women of



the congregation are invited. Bring your favourite dish! Come share in the camaraderie and joy at the beginning of the Christmas season.



Anniversary Service

The 50th year of the St. Stephen congregation is coming to a close. A celebration service has been planned for January 11th, 2009. Rev. Robert Dalglish, Rev. Kathi Urbasik-Hindley and Rev. Linda Nash will be leading worship. Please join us!



Guest Speaker

A student from Emmanuel College School of Theology will be preaching at St. Stephen on Sunday, February 1st, 2009. Don't miss this!



Annual Reports

Another year is almost over and once again it is time to think about our Annual Report. It would be appreciated if all groups that meet at St. Stephen could have their reports submitted to the office by December 31st.



Financial Update

Envelope offerings as of October 31, 2008 were \$93,000 vs. \$100,000 as of October 31, 2007. To meet our daily expenses, it is important this shortfall be covered by the end of the year.