



# Advent Greetings

St. Paul's United Church, Tillsonburg, ON



## MESSAGE FROM REV. KARLENE

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Greetings St. Paul's Family,

What is the message we want to focus on this year as we draw near to Christmas? Could it be "Joy to the world the Lord has come?" As we begin our Advent reflections on November 26, 2023, it seems Christmas is far away but our young friends will remind us that it is only twenty-nine sleeps away.

How quickly the time has passed, it seems like only yesterday we were saying Happy New Year! The days quickly slip away, we have had laughter and pain, new babies and lost love ones; both people and furry friends. In spite of this we are not giving up, we will keep seeking the joy that is possible through our Saviour Jesus Christ!

This year we are focusing on a series called "How Does a Weary World Rejoice," poignant words, reflecting the times we are living in. In retrospect Jesus was born in a weary world, a world that was facing many challenges. Politicians issuing high taxation and census that required an advanced pregnant Mary to travel with Joseph to his hometown. Jesus, God's only Son was born in a feeding trough among the stench of the animals because of accommodation shortage. It was a weary world. But in the midst of the weariness, the angels sang, the shepherds worshipped and the wisemen brought gifts.

Today amid our weariness let us seek to find ways of rejoicing and ways of extending joy. The team at Sanctified Art writers of the series state:

Joy is deeply relational and rooted in the fact that we belong to God. Perhaps many of us live with the myth that joy is not something we deserve, or that it is wholly out of reach. But our joy is rooted in the truth that we belong to God..... You deserve to feel joy—fully. The world needs your joy, even if you are weary. Our joy is better when it is shared.

As we begin another journey into Advent let us search for the joy in life around us. Let me know how the journey goes for you as we tread through a weary world in this season.

Joy-fully yours,

Rev. Karlene



## **ADVENT GREETING 2023 FROM COUNCIL**

Sunday November 26 begins the journey of the advent Season at St. Paul's United Church. This "season" is a time for each of us to prepare our hearts and minds for the "special baby's birth". An advent wreath adorned with candles symbolizing Hope, Peace, Joy and Love will be lit each Sunday reminding us of the Christian tradition for Advent. Thus begins the preparation for advent that forms part of our worship as we move through the Advent Season.



How do you as an individual (or family) prepare for Christmas? Are you caught up in the busyness of the season. Are you stressed as you hustle and bustle around doing your baking, cooking, decorating and shopping and anything else that needs doing? Do you take time to prepare yourself for the "Birth" that we celebrate yearly on December 25?

Remember the Reason for the Season. During the month of December, there are many special events taking place at St. Paul's UC in addition to our regular Sunday morning worship. Feel free to join us at any of the events. Times and details will in print soon. We welcome you and your family and friends. Hope to see you there.

During Advent let us continue our journey toward Christmas --joyous and excited - ready to welcome God's child into our personal lives.

Blessings to you and your family as we greet the SEASON with anticipation, excitement and wonder.

Mary Anne Silverthorn  
Acting Chair of Council  
Chair of the Worship Committee



## **GREETINGS FROM REV. PAT - PASTORAL CARE**

Advent Season draws near, a time when we prepare for the celebration of Christmas and the Christ Child's birth. During this season, families have many traditions they honour. Traditions which enlighten the Spirit within us to help others. One tradition completed throughout Advent or during the Christmas season is the giving of poinsettias.

I have a white poinsettia which I received 3 years ago. Over the years I have watered, clipped, and cared for the plant and it is always gives me great pleasure when I see it bloom each Christmas season.



I think of St. Paul's tradition, of arranging red poinsettias banked around the altar. It warms the heart to see the beauty of these flowers, while worshipping in the sanctuary and after service provides an outreach to our faith family. This is a tradition which has continued over numerous years. May your family traditions kindle the flame within you and be a gift that keeps on giving. I wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and may God's Blessing be with you this Holiday Season.

Rev. Pat





*We wish you a blessed Christmas and a healthy New Year.*

*Rev. Maurice and Ruth Francis*



Dear friends,

The Advent season is a time of reflection and preparation for the miracle of Christ's birth in the world. Most importantly, it is a call to prepare ourselves, our hearts and our homes to receive Him anew as our Saviour and Lord. When our hearts are troubled, and the world around us is cause for great concern, we yearn for peace; that calm assurance that only Christ can give.



So, as we travel together as St. Paul's family towards Bethlehem, I pray for you the Peace of Christ and the indwelling of the Love that came to us at Christmas.

Rev. Margaret Vanderzweerde



*Wishing you a season full  
of light and laughter.*

*St. Paul's Messy Church  
family*



**The final Messy Church program for 2023 is  
"ONLY 22 MORE SLEEPS ('TIL CHRISTMAS EVE)' on December 2**

### **CHOIR NEWS**

*St. Paul's choir and friends perform the Cantata  
'BEAUTIFUL STAR' a gospel Christmas musical  
Saturday, December 16 at 2:00 p.m. and during worship on  
Sunday, December 17. Please invite guests to come, there is no  
admission but donations are welcome.*



## UCW GREETING

The UCW has had a most successful year. We are now meeting in person, which for many members is welcomed as personal fellowship is enjoyed by everyone. This fall we have had two successful fund raisers - chocolate sales and our annual bazaar. The UCW is most thankful for the support of the congregation. Without everyone's help and support our endeavours would not come to fruition. We are meeting the fourth Wednesday of the month at 1pm in the Friendship Room with worship, a program, and social time. We were limping along without a leader through September but in October Laura Mahoney volunteered to become leader. We are very grateful for her service. We welcome all ladies of the congregation to join us. We will not have a meeting in December but will reconvene January 24. Please come and join us. We would most welcome your attendance. We wish everyone a blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year!



## GREETINGS FROM SUNDAY SCHOOL



As we approach the Advent and Christmas season our children will be going through the Christmas story each week starting with the angel Gabriel meeting with Mary. We want our children to understand the true meaning of Christmas - that Jesus was the first gift and the very best gift. We hope that, as they prepare for the Children's Pageant, they will realize that Christmas is not all about presents but about Jesus.

This past year has brought us two new additions to our Sunday school class and we have enjoyed getting to know these little girls.

Our youth are still eager to get together and we have had several breakfasts at Korner Perk where we learn more about each other. The youth will be representing our church at Maple Manor in a couple of weeks as they sing to the residents and spend some time with them.

We have a great group of children in our Sunday school and youth. It is wonderful to see the children being loved by all the adults here.

This year - as we get into a busy season of Christmas and all that entails - let us remember that Jesus is the reason for the Season.

May God bless all of you this Christmas.

Karen Hodges, Brenda Marshall

Jeannet van Hoeve and all of our wonderful kids.



## SEASON'S GREETINGS FROM THE COMMUNITY KITCHEN

The 14<sup>th</sup> season of Community Kitchen started out on a somber note as we began on October 14<sup>th</sup> without our program founder Laurie Drew who passed away unexpectedly in September. Laurie saw a need in our community that was not being met and gave birth to the idea of running a weekly hot meal service for our community members in need every Saturday in the months of October through April. Laurie was a dedicated leader and champion for our community "guests" who attend on a weekly basis. Through Laurie's dedication, ability to form community relations and the countless hours that our volunteers give every year this program has and will continue to serve those in need within our community.

As Community Kitchen coordinators, along with our team leaders Laura McFarland,

Dave Morris and Vermell Stevens, Julie and I would like to thank the members of St. Paul's for their financial contributions, and time dedicated through volunteering on one of our 4 teams.

We wish you a happy holiday season to you and your family.

Keith and Julie Avery



### *WORSHIP NEWS - Important Dates for our church family*

#### NOVEMBER

*26<sup>th</sup> Sunday Advent 1 Worship with Communion 10:30 a.m.*

#### DECEMBER

*3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday Advent 2 - Volunteer Sunday and Adopt-a-family 10:30 a.m.*

*4<sup>th</sup> Saturday Messy Church 10:00 - 12:00*

*10<sup>th</sup> Sunday Advent 3 - Children's Pageant & Poinsettia Sunday 10:30 a.m.*

*15<sup>th</sup> Friday Blue Christmas service 1:00 p.m.*

*16<sup>th</sup> Saturday Cantata with very special guests 2:00 p.m.*

*17<sup>th</sup> Sunday Advent 4 - Choir Cantata during worship 10:30 a.m.*

*24<sup>th</sup> Christmas Sunday Worship 10:30 a.m.*

*Christmas Eve worship 6:00 p.m.*

*31<sup>st</sup> New Year's Eve 10:30 a.m. (Rev. Bonnie Pilkey)*



#### **Stewardship:**

The new "Gifts with Vision" catalogue for 2023-2024 is now available online or in the Rotunda.



The funds collected from the special Green Christmas Giving envelope totals will be divided between the Salvation Army and Sakura House.



**ALL Charitable Donations must be received at the office or in the church mailbox prior to 6:00 p.m. on December 30<sup>th</sup> or on the offering plate at the Dec 31<sup>st</sup> New Year's Eve 10:30 a.m. service. This is our last deposit for 2023. The office will be closed Christmas week re-opening Tuesday, January 2.**

## ***ADVENT GREETING FROM REV. BONNIE PILKEY, VAM***

The angel said to her, "*Do not be afraid Mary, for you have found favour with God.*"  
(Luke 1: 30)

Advent Greetings St. Paul's Folks!

Once more we are taking time during this Advent season to let go of our fears,  
our busyness, our "shoulds," and of course, our "if onlys."



It is ironic, in many respects that Advent, which signals the beginning of the Christian year, leads us into the end of our year as well!

Ah but my friends, as we take time to think about it, it all makes so much sense! You see, in order to create space for new beginnings, we must also acknowledge endings.

It has been a challenging year for St. Paul's as you have said a final goodbye to so many loved ones who have been the heart and soul of this congregation.

But in the midst of it all, there has also been space for laughter and joy, and you have dared to vision, to listen to God, to one another, and to your community.

And so as together we prepare to move into the adventure of a new year, we can hear the angel whispering, "Do not be afraid!"

Yes, in the midst of a time of war and upheaval all over our world, and especially in the Holy Land, we are called to let go of our fears and anxieties, as we make that journey with Mary, a remarkable young woman who literally and metaphorically, creates space in her very being for the Christ child!

We are also called to walk with Joseph, that courageous man who turns his life upside down and all all around, to follow a dream, and to live out his love for God and commitment to Mary.

Mary and Joseph lived in a time of incredible hardship and upheaval. The Christ child was born into challenge, heartache and strife.

But in the midst of it all, God held them close and every single day the angel whispered, "Do not be afraid."

Friends, let us make this Advent journey together, and let go of our fears and everyday worries! Let us create space for angels, for Mary and Joseph, and most importantly, for this little One who is the Christ.

Let us make our way to the manger with open hearts and outstretched arms- ready to hold the Christ child once more!

Blessings on the journey!

Rev. Bonnie

