



Spirit of Shalom

Duncan United Church

Sharing our faith from the beautiful Cowichan Valley of Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada.



Season of Advent 2020

I BELIEVE EVEN WHEN...



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I BELIEVE - Keith Simmonds, Minister

Our Advent Series is aptly named for a time like this. When we cannot sing together inside the church or perhaps the odd hilltop or oceanscape, can we still believe in the power of music to change our lives and reclaim our spirits?

Coming together is so important to our human condition. When televisions began to populate households, the death of the local theatre was predicted. Dooms were pronounced as the internet made films and information sharing of every kind available on cell phones. But arenas, rinks, theatres, concert halls, music festivals, plays and political rallies continued to usher throngs of people.

In Palestine and Israel I saw ancient venues. Rows of seats looking down on a stage, gentle slopes leading down to the shores, hosting people come together to view a spectacle, take in a play or hear Jesus speak of God’s undying love. Technology has not affected our desire to be present with one another, only a life-threatening virus can put it in abeyance for a while.

I think our need to be in community is so compelling that it drives some of us to heights of foolishness. Risking everything in the name of ‘freedom’, insisting on their ‘right’ to ignore barriers and protocols, they march, confront and demand to ‘prove’ the precautions unnecessary. I think they be missing human contact so badly that, unable to attend a church or a game or a bar, they’ve found another way and another cause to justify their presence.

Most, however, do the best they can. Take precautions, feel a little foolish perhaps, but determined not to spread anything to anyone, especially those near and dear. Stay at home, offer support and care where we can, make things, clean things, sort things, paint things. Whatever it is we do to pour out our creative energy, to share something, somehow, in someway. As the days go by we wonder what ‘new normal’ waits ahead.

I believe that might be one of the gifts of this time. To explore the gifts we’ve been given, those innate to our being, those we’ve learned along the way, those we’ve received from others, to explore them, expand them and share them in new ways. To bring measures of creativity and thoughtfulness, care and consideration to this wanting world. To connect the dots and build understandings new to us.

We have time to hear Christ’s call to love and to see where it’s been lacking. To wonder about our systems and to put things to rights. As our sisters and brothers call out for right relationship we have time to re-create with them. To see anew the mountains, to dance across the waves, to settle in the sunsets and rise at the new day’s dawning. We have time to consider, in the music of our lives, in the harmonies of creation. What it true, what is necessary, what is kind?

We have time to realize we are God’s gifts to the Earth, to one another, and to consider how best to bring ourselves to this waiting and wanting world where those other created gifts also grow in realization and in promise.

We need not crowd into public venues, nor sing in concert with the folk in the pew beside us to realize our full potential, to know we are one in God’s light. To play our own notes in the chorus of creation. Let us take this time of Advent waiting to consider our gifts and how best to sing them into being.

Blessings and Joy upon you in this extended, Adventageous time.





I Believe Even When—Virginia MacCarthy, Board Chair

I believe in the goodness of all people even when the world is turned upside down with a global pandemic.

This is so clear when I look specifically at our Church community and see all the folks who are working so hard to keep our church family in touch with one another, who are working so hard to keep our services running online, who are working so hard to keep our church going. From our amazing staff, to our Pastoral Care committee, to all our church groups that are continuing to meet, differently, but staying connected. Our interconnectedness has helped so many of us through this difficult time.

I believe even when we need to be physically distanced from one another, our love and caring for each other does not diminish.

Our love and caring for each other keep us going even if we cannot show it with hugs. Our messages to each other through online sources, notes or telephone conversations keeps our communication open and reflects our ability to show our caring in a variety of ways.

I believe even when everything looks bleak, dark or overwhelming, that hope and joy still prevail.

We need to believe that hope is always present and that joy can be found in the unexpected. We need to have hope each day that we will again connect with our friends and family in ways like we have done in the past. We need to find joy in little things and to understand how truly blessed we are. We have each other and we have our faith.

I believe even when we seem to be calling out for answers and cannot always hear a response, that our faith will sustain us.

Our faith in God, our faith in the world, our faith in each other. Our faith in the innate goodness of people everywhere. I believe.

I would also like to thank everyone on the Unified Board and all the Church Committees who are all dedicated to making sure that the church is able to remain open in a modified way. Our church family has risen to the challenge of this pandemic so admirably as we continue to find our path forward. Thank you to everyone.

Virginia MacCarthy, Unified board Chair





I BELIEVE EVEN WHEN...- Linda Evans

It's an interesting theme to have and was obviously chosen for this Covid time we are all working through because we all know believing in and having faith is what will get us through these difficult times.

So I thought I would change it up a bit and say

I believe in the goodness of people even when they do something that I feel is unjust.

I believe in the light even when it is dark and the sun is below and not above.

I believe God loves me even when my actions may not deserve that love.

I believe that we will get through this even when the number of Covid cases continue to rise.

I believe in the story of Santa Claus even when many adults stop believing

I believe in having hope even when things can feel hopeless around us.

I believe that God loves all people even when they themselves don't believe in God

Believing in the things we cannot see, knowing the things we know without proof is part of the mystery of life. I struggle when people only believe in the factual and don't believe in hope or have some form of faith. I can't imagine what it must be like to live like that day after day. To me there is nothing more important than having hope for a better world even in a magical way.

I believe in allowing our children to dream of fairies and dragons, of the Tooth Fairy and Santa Claus and all of the unseen because if we don't dream when we are young how will we ever have dreams when we become adults. Our world is a beautiful place and full of so much goodness yet many days all we hear or read about are the horrid things that are happening around us. We can't ignore it, we need to act on it but we also can't let it consume us because then it blocks out the goodness and there is just so much good in our world. I just finished watching a TV program about a church family of deep faith. They always greeted people with "God is good" and responded with "All the time". Now there are times in all of our lives that we probably don't feel that way, that we wonder why such horrid things can happen in our world, how a virus can cause so much grief and fear but that doesn't mean that God is not good.

I believe that even in the darkest of times if we have our faith and our church we can move through anything together, God is with us. As we approach this time of Advent we all know it is going to be very different this year but it can still be a magical time for us all just as it was thousands of years ago. We need to believe and have faith that next year will be better. If we can't gather with family this year, or sing our favourite Christmas hymns in the sanctuary, if we can't serve Christmas dinners for those who are hungry or share a hug with our church friends we just have to believe and pray that we will be able to do all these things together again in the near future. I believe even when others may not, God is good, all the time and so is our wonderful world which is full of loving, caring people like yourselves.





CHRISTMAS HAMPERS

Be a Christmas Angel and help support a family to celebrate Christmas by donating a gift. Please contact Linda, either by phone or email between November 23rd and December 10th and you can choose the age and gender of a child or a parent. We ask that gifts be returned to the office, unwrapped by December 13th. We have forty children to buy gifts for this year so we hope you enjoy shopping for little ones! Thank you all for your continued support!



LONGEST NIGHT/BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE

Monday, December 21st 6:00 & 7:00 p.m.

An evening of peaceful reflection, nativity scenes and labyrinth.

Worship on the Longest Night of the Year, December 21st, is rooted deeply in the traditions of many faiths, and was itself a part of the faith traditions that became a part of Christianity. Humans have always seen this time as Sacred, Holy and set apart. A time nested in the cusp of light and darkness.

Humans have gathered on the longest night to share fear and loss and loneliness in the company of others who offer support, care and common feeling. Even though the night will end in a new and longer day, we pause to pay homage to our lost ones, to do right by our memorable loves before entering into the cultural celebrations of the season.

A short worship service acknowledges our common aches, while time spent walking the labyrinth takes us into reflection and out to the world. The nativity scenes come from many places and remind us that the love of the child to be born again at Christmas brings hope and promise to hearts and souls from across the globe.

Please join us for a night of worship, contemplation and promise.
Nativities and labyrinth at 6:00 pm. Service begins at 7:00 pm



TURKEY COOKERS!!

Although the Cowichan Basket Society is unable to host their community Christmas dinner they are going to be providing prepared turkey dinners to families which they can pick up and take home to heat up. We are in need of people to pick up a turkey from the church on December 13th and cook it for drop off on December 16th or 17th at the Food Bank on Garden street where they will carve the turkeys and prepare the meals. If you are able to cook a turkey please call Linda in the office.





ADVENT CALENDAR



ADVENT I Hope – Sunday, November 29th- 10:00 am Service

ADVENT II Love – Sunday, December 6th– 10:00 AM service

ADVENT III Joy— Sunday, December 13th – 10 AM Service

ADVENT IV Peace – Sunday, December 20th- 10:00 AM Service

LONGEST NIGHT SERVICE (BLUE CHRISTMAS) - Monday, December 21st

Labyrinth & Nativity Scenes 6:00 pm

Service at 7:00 PM

CHRISTMAS EVE LESSONS & CAROLS – Thursday December 24th

3:00 pm—Afternoon Service

6:00 PM – Early Evening Service

7:30 PM - Late Service.

Please contact the church office to register for whichever Christmas Eve service you would like to attend.

CHRISTMAS DAY SERVICE – December 25th – 10:00 AM

Brunch following the service





I BELIEVE, EVEN WHEN LIFE'S "CURRENTS" TURN AGAINST US...

I often hear God's reassuring voice in the stirrings and movement of Creation, in the world outdoors. It was there that God's Spirit sent a reminder to believe, even when life's "currents" seem to turn against us, and darkness threatens to overwhelm.

That particular December day, a few years ago, had begun with great anticipation. Conditions for winter sea kayaking off Gabriola Island were perfect. Clear skies, mild temperatures, and a light swell on the Salish Sea gave the whole adventure a sense of "dreaminess." Assisted by an outgoing tide, there was a heady, almost intoxicating feel of excitement exploring the Flat Top Islands and looking across the empty sea to the stunning snow-capped Coastal Ranges of the mainland. When the time came in the mid-afternoon to return to the launch site at Degnen Bay, we felt a healthy tiredness. Little did we know, however, the day's real effort had not yet begun.

Life can "turn on a dime." Sometimes it feels that way with the tides. We hadn't paid sufficient attention to the time and could never have imagined that the last hour of paddling would feel almost interminable with the tide now against us and the sun beginning to set. The current in Gabriola Passage can exceed eight knots, far in excess of what is possible in a kayak. Missing this closing window of opportunity, meant going to shore at Drumbeg Park and waiting until well after dark for the waters to slow. Knowing that paddling in this place in the darkness would not be a good idea, we set off.

Halfway through the Passage, it felt like the kayaks were barely making any progress. The opposing current continued to slowly build. Energies fading, we both needed to eat and drink something but didn't dare take hands off the paddles. It would have only resulted in being swept downstream.

Realizing that we hadn't told anyone exactly where we would be paddling, self-recriminations for the mistakes we had made flowed, along with a rising sense of concern. It was then that I began to hear in my head the words of a song I loved. Sung by Peter Gabriel and Kate Bush, "Don't give up" is a reminder that even when we feel we have no fight left in us, we must never give up. Encouraging each other, fresh energy rose from deep inside.

Strengthened by God's presence in the words of a simple song, we made it back, chastened, but thankful and relieved. The comforting words of the 23rd Psalm assure us that God is there even when we are in dark and challenging places. The uplifting, encouraging, and poetic words of Isaiah 9:1, a scripture so often heard during this season of Advent and Christmas, remind us that "the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light." You and I are those people, and in the darkness of our fears, struggles, anxieties, and pandemic fatigue, we can be confident that the light and love of Christ is always there. They energize us and help us find our way, even when life's tides and currents seem to turn against us, and the darkness of despair threatens to overwhelm.

In the face of whatever challenges exist in our lives, our faith reminds us that we must never give up. Ever. As Paul said in his letter to the Philippians (4:13), "I can do all this through Christ who gives me strength." Please be assured, dear friends, God DOES give us the strength to do what we need to do. Thanks be to God.

Wishing peace and love to all this Holy Season.

Duncan.

(Rev'd) Duncan Barwise.





IN THE SPOTLIGHT! - Ray and Marion Gordon

Ray was born in the city of Portsmouth, England, and Marion in the small village of Heacham, in Norfolk, England.

They met when Ray came to teach on the Queen's Estate, in Norfolk, and were married in July, 1966.

In August of 1969 Ray and Marion emigrated to Canada, sailing on the "Empress of Canada " from Liverpool, England to Montreal.

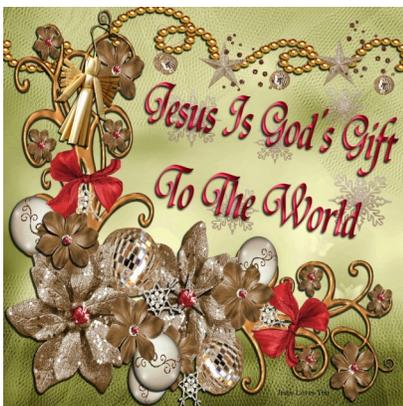
Ray taught High School English, became Vice Principal and then Principal at Eston, Sask. from 1969 to 1977.

In 1977 Ray became Director of Education in the Hudson Bay, School Division a position he held until his retirement in 1992, completing a 36 year career in Education.

Marion worked for Canada Post as an assistant in the Post Office while in Hudson Bay, becoming a Senior Assistant. After Ray's retirement Marion became Postmaster in Warman, Sask, from 1997 to 2005. After 36 years on the Prairies, Marion accepted a transfer as Postmaster to Saanichton Post Office on Vancouver Island, living in Sidney, fulfilling a mutual wish to retire by the ocean. Marion retired in 2011 but continued to work as a casual for another five years. In November of 2019 they moved to Duncan to be near some of their family.

Ray and Marion were members of the Methodist Church in England and Ray was a Local Preacher. When they came to Canada they joined the United Church in Eston and have served the church in many capacities throughout the past 50 years. They both enjoy singing and have joined choirs wherever they were living. Walking is a special activity and they enjoy exploring the trails around their home.

A fun fact about their lives is that in the 1980s, Ray won a contest where the first prize was 5 holidays to anywhere Air Canada flew where there was a Hilton Hotel. Over a period of five years, they enjoyed trips to London, England, Switzerland, Jamaica, Barbados and Trinidad.





IN THE SPOTLIGHT!- Eric Marshall

I was born in King's Lynn in Norfolk - this is a port on the east coast of England. The only other famous person from Lynn is George Vancouver - I never thought as a child that I would ever live on Vancouver Island. When the war broke out my father, worked for a company that owned ships that plied between between Lynn and Rotterdam in Holland. So the company was no longer in business as Holland was soon occupied by the Germans. We then moved to Blackpool on the west coast - this is a well know holiday resort - famous for its illuminations each fall - lights on Blackpool Tower and all along the sea front.

After graduating from Blackpool Grammar School I went to King's College of London University where I obtained a B.Sc. in Zoology - specializing in marine zoology.

I had to do two years National Service - I rose to the rank of Corporal in the Royal Corps of Signals.

My occupation has been as a librarian in scientific libraries. First for the Freshwater Biological Association on Windermere in the English Lake District. I was then Science Librarian at Royal Holloway College, part of London University.

In 1967 I came to Canada - to Winnipeg where I was librarian for the new Freshwater Institute, then part of the Fisheries Research Board of Canada (now Department of Fisheries & Oceans). I retired in 1992. After my retirement they named the library after me as it was viewed as one of the best libraries in the world on Freshwater biology. However in 2014 the Harper Government closed many government libraries and mine was one of them.

In 1996 Dorothy and I moved to Cowichan Bay and have both been involved in many local voluntary organizations. (Elder College, Cowichan Valley Museum & Archives, Cowichan Valley Naturalists Society, Somenos Marsh Society...)The Cowichan Estuary Nature Centre is one place where we put in many hours with school classes and when it is open to the public at weekends.

One of my favourite hobbies is photography. I have taken part in many amateur dramatic performances, starting at school. For the past few years I have given at 'Address to the Haggis' at our Burn's Dinners.

For a number of years Dorothy and I went to Hawaii each winter where we volunteered with a whale re-search group. Once while out in a small motor boat we had stopped and were having our lunch - the boat just drifting - when a juvenile humpback whale came up, head first, right alongside the boat - so close you could have touched it. I think it was just curious and wanted to see who we were!





I BELIEVE EVEN WHEN...Maureen Gallacher

Just to say, I believe always when I see the beautiful rainbows this fall, shining over Mount Prevost and our wonderful Somenos Marsh. How can I not believe even when my regular life has ceased to exist as I have known it at Duncan United Church and my family life in general when all of a sudden a friend calls on the phone.

I believe when my very young pen pal Mal Loudon sends my next letter, even when I know they will cease as Kindergarten fills his life.

I believe even when my elderly dog Patches has a serious operation as I know I can trust our skilled veterinarian to keep her safe.

I believe even when the virus news worsens each day because I know our amazing doctors are giving us their best advice and encouraging us to care of one another.

As my late Mother would tell us at bed time "God 's in His Heaven, all's right with the world".

Yes I believe...



CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES— Connie Masson

I think we are all wondering how we are going to "do" Christmas while we adhere to whatever safeguards are in place at that time. For many of us , coming to church with family, is paramount to the experience of celebrating the birth of Jesus.

The good news is, we will be providing extra services on Christmas Eve, that you can still attend with our Covid precautions in place.

Pre-registration will be necessary, and your worship planners have been hard at work to create services that we guarantee will touch your hearts , as well as include a special surprise. And if you are not able to attend in person, you can still have the Zoom experience.

Details about times to follow, but as you know seating is limited, and we want to make sure all possible seats are filled, as well as making sure all those who want can attend.

Stay tuned!





I'M A BELIEVER! - Skye, Feline Home Office Assistance

As we all know cats and people are in many ways very different. We walk differently, wash ourselves differently, speak different languages and totally live different life styles. Us cats live a much more relaxed life that the two legged. Some folks, especially those who are dog lovers, may feel that cats aren't that smart as we don't do all the tricks that dogs do but well, just between us, cats are actually very wise. We watch, we learn, we totally understand what you are saying and then yes, we just carry on our way doing our own thing. However we do have some things in common. Cats like people have faith, trust and hope—WE BELIEVE!

We have faith and trust in the people that love us and care for us. We believe that when our pals walk out the door each day that they will return. We trust them to be there for us, to care for us and feed us and to do whatever is necessary for us to live happy healthy lives. Just like people we cats are not all the same. We all have very different personalities, some cats I am sure think they are better than the people that care for them, others are more humble. Yet, us cats, like you people need to believe in the good in the world, to believe that each day that food dish will be filled, to believe that even when bad things happen to us (such as getting wet from a vase of flowers that we have knocked over) that we are loved and that things will get better. We all need to have hope.

As Christmas approaches I am feeling joyful and full of hope. It really is one of my favourite times because for the most part people seem to be happier. Linda brings a tree in and hangs these lovely balls all over it which are easy to knock down and I can chase them all over the house, music is played and the kitchen has wonderful smells. What more could a cat want in life, a warm fire, a lovely display of toys to play with, music to listen to and good food to eat. So yes I believe that life is good because this world is full of wonderous beings both four legged and two legged, crawly things and flying things (that I can never quite catch) and so for all of life I am truly thankful.

Wishing you all a very peaceful time of Advent. May we all believe that this world will one day find peace and that all people will live together in healthy harmony.

Christmas Blessings to you from Skye.





ADVENT SERIES

Where is music in these strange times? Many of us are finding out that being part of communal music-making is central to our "normal" lives. Join with us to view some exciting films about the many different ways music is part of our shared experience and can change lives.

Film Festival! Five Movies in Advent.

Let's watch a movie together and then spend some time in conversation afterwards.

On Tuesday evenings at 6:30 pm beginning December 1st., watch the movie, have some conversation about the way it explores music in our lives and be done by 8:30 at the latest. Please find the zoom link at the bottom of the page and join us.

The viewing list is:

Week One: Defiant Requiem – a film about an orchestra formed in a WWII Concentration Camp and the way the music allowed prisoners to claim their own humanity in spite of every effort to dehumanize them. The website www.defiantrequiem.org offers followups with folk who survived the camp. It is dedicated to the power of music to save souls. A guide and a compass to our present times.

Week Two: Girls on the Wall – a film about a group of girls held in an institution for Juveniles in the States. The film is shot over a nine month period and covers the writing, development and performance of a musical theatre offering sprung from the stories of their lives. It contains some very strong language but is an experience of music's power to help us understand and come to terms with some of the most difficult issues of our lives and living. A behind the scenes video can be seen here: <https://youtu.be/1wF6sDhKTKI>

Week Three: A journey across five continents from China through South Africa, Chile, England and Japan with Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Hear the Ode to Joy sung under many circumstances by many surprising voices. See the trailer here: https://youtu.be/Q_FWoRn4xrM

Week Four: Rumble, The Indians who Rocked the World "an exploration of the profound and overlooked influence of Indigenous people on popular music in North America. Focusing on music icons like Link Wray, Jimi Hendrix, Buffy Sainte-Marie, Taboo (the Black Eyed Peas), Charlie Patton, Mildred Bailey, Jesse Ed Davis, Robbie Robertson and Randy Castillo." Addressing systemic racism faced by some of our greatest voices, the film celebrates the 'subversive' role of Indigenous music. Find out more here: <https://www.rumblethemovie.com/home>

Week Five: The Singing Revolution How do you keep hope alive when everything is lost? The story of Estonia's revolution against Soviet Occupation. The Singing Revolution documents how the Estonian People regained their freedom and helped topple the Soviet Union. Just people, standing in their fields and neighbourhoods, singing about their country and their faith in freedom.

More here: <https://youtu.be/4njksFKyycY>





I BELIEVE BECAUSE I BREATHE—Daisy Anderson

On Christmas day hundreds of years ago, a newly born, wet and sticky Jesus drew his first breath. With his life he brought into the world gifts of joy, peace and love.

Fifty years ago in my own life, I would have given anything for just a bit of that joy, peace and love. As I wrote in my diary at that time, "...I could hardly care less. Why? Because I'm Dead. That's right DEAD. Not physically or mentally, but spiritually. I can't feel....Anyway I'm dead and who knows when I'll be alive."

Thankfully those feelings didn't last indefinitely and my life is good now.

A good life is vibrant, humming and engaging. A good life abounds in joy, peace and love, that is until the inevitable darkness of shame, sorrow, resentment or fear overcomes us. These darker feelings are also part of a good life.

When this happens, we can listen to the words of Mother Teresa who said, "Prayer is the breath of life to our soul."

Breath prayers work. Through breath prayers, we can seek reassurance and comfort; we can offer praise and gratitude. A breath prayer can connect us deeply with our soul, bringing joy, peace and love.

A friend of mine once told me about a breath prayer that she likes. It's taken from writings of the mystic Julien of Norwich and it goes like this:

Inhale slowly and gently whisper... "All shall be well."

Exhale slowly and gently whisper... "All shall be well."

Continue the pattern of breathing saying ... "And all manner of things" ... "Shall be well."

In fact, we can choose any phrase or poem that is meaningful to us in the moment and follow the same pattern of breathing in prayer. Here are a few of my favourites:

His love endures forever.

God, show me your ways.

The 23rd psalm.

I will always remember the awe inspired by one my breath prayers. One day I was walking along a mossy path in Bright Angel Park, contemplating and breathing in the cool spring air. Something above and around me aroused my senses. The forest was alive with music. I stopped, sat and listened. The birds were there, singing, but where? I listened to the tiny Pacific Wrens singing elaborate, sweet trills that seemed to go on forever. I heard quiet flitting sounds in the bushes; I saw flickers of movement in the trees. Nature was full of songsters. There I sat in wordless prayer. I was breathing. I knew I was alive and I knew God breathed on me. I was immersed in joy, peace and love.

Breath prayers do amazing things for us. Breath prayers heal us, teach us forgiveness, bring joy and help us grow in gratitude. An unseen mysterious wonder, the breath of life is the spirit that moves within us.

Nowadays I am so thankful to be alive, breathing and filled with the joy, peace and love that I so desperately needed many years ago.

Soon we will celebrate Christmas, the birth of Christ, and may we all be blessed with the gifts of joy, peace and love. Amen.





“Lilibet’s Advent Spiritual Practices” -Sarah Prestwich

Hello, Duncan United Church!

Some of you might not know me or just see me making mischief in the background of my mum’s Church videos... Well I shall introduce myself; my name is Lilibet Prestwich and I am the beloved companion to Sarah, that crazy lady who looks after the Children, Youth, and Families in this wonderful Church!

Well the world is feeling a little topsy-turvy now and we feel like we are floating and do not know what grounds us anymore! So, my mum and I have come up with some spiritual practices that will help you to ground your focus and look towards Christ this Advent season. My practices include gnawing on my Nylabone and sleeping upside down on the couch! But as we know the Christmas season can get quite overwhelming, so we encourage you to slow down this Christmas season and enjoy the little things.

Spiritual Practice #1:

Make an advent wreath for your household out of things that you have in the house. Remembering that there are 4 candles and the Christ Candle in the middle. As we move into each week of Advent, take some time to light each candle and focus on the themes of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love.

Spiritual Practice #2:

Set an intention for yourself this Advent and Christmas season. Seeing as the season this year is going to look a little different because of the pandemic, try to settle on an intention of how you and your family would like to spend the season.

Spiritual Practice #3:

I encourage you to take a walk out in nature this Advent and Christmas season. Look around and try to notice the sounds, the sights, the smells, feelings of God’s creation. If you feel creative enough, find some branches or leaves on the ground that you can make some natural decorations out of for the home.

Spiritual Practice #4:

Find something that brings you joy this season. It could be a small activity or a hobby, or just reading your favourite book again. Joy is such a wonderful part of this season and we need to have things in our lives that bring us some Joy this season. (My mum just put up our Christmas tree, a little early I know, but it made her so happy and filled her with Joy! I then proceeded to sniff all the ornaments and take one to bed with me...)

I hope that these Spiritual Practices can be helpful for you this Advent and Christmas season. When we take the time to pause, we can genuinely appreciate what this wonderful season is all about.

Well I am going back to chewing on my new bone as my mum continues to decorate the house with garland and the Christmas Village. Happy Christmas everyone!

Love,

Lilibet Prestwich





Love of Music—Connie Masson

Music is my best friend. It is there for me , night or day. It is there to express sorrow, and it is there to express joy. And playing a little Beethoven on the piano is great when I am mad. But it is not enough for me to just listen to music. I need to create music. And there is no greater feeling for me than a choral moment, when the sum becomes greater than its parts. We experience it in the act of congregational singing sometimes, when we are singing words and music that we just know are touching the hearts of most people around us, and we sit back down feeling energized and renewed . We can feel that energy. I experience it as a choir director, when individual voices combine to make something beautiful, and we know we have gone beyond words and music on the page to create something sacred. I experience it as a choral singer, where I am reminded of the importance of listening to those around me, because my voice is no more important than another, and together we create beauty.

And then, Covid. I was not prepared for the emptiness I would feel as these experiences were not possible. I feel like a part of me is missing. Yes, I still get to sing the songs on Sunday mornings, but I do not want to be the only voice we hear. It is so hard.

And so , as Advent nears, I am excited to share in our Worship series, “I Believe, Even When”. This will give us an opportunity to think about the power of music to transform and reconcile through hope, joy, peace and love. I am hoping as many of us as possible will participate in the film series and Sunday worship, and I really believe we will fill a little of our emptiness in this challenging time. Please think about inviting a friend, even if it is just for the online film series. I believe we are all in need of some hope and transformation as we grapple with loneliness and isolation. This will be a little light in the darkness.

The staff of Duncan United Church wish you all a very Merry Christmas! Blessings to you all for all you do for our church and our community.

May this Advent be a time of peace filled joy for you and your families. Stay safe and let's pray next year we will all be together again.

Keith, Connie, Linda, Sarah and Joy



Duncan United Church

246 Ingram Street
Duncan, British Columbia
Canada V9L 1P4

Sharing in Ministry:

Keith Simmonds (Minister)

Sarah Prestwich (SundayJourney/Youth Coordinator)

Linda Evans (Administration/Outreach Coordinator)

Connie Masson (Music Director)

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Interesting Links for you to browse...

Duncan United Church

Web page: www.duncanunited.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/duncanunited/

Youtube site: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCarIwkTa31rKtKCKd1-N5Lg>

Micah 6:8 “What does the Lord require of you...but to seek justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God”

