



Spirit of Shalom

Duncan United Church

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

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Advent Edition 2018

A Blessed Advent to All—Keith Simmonds, Minister

Dear Friends,

In a world aching for the promise of the child of peace and the proclamation of love's abundance both Jesus and his mother pronounced, it is good to reflect upon their words, location and meaning. I had the chance to do that in Palestine in November.

In ancient Sepphoris, where the Daughters of St. Anne house and teach homeless children I sat on a fallen column in the remains of a Crusader Church dedicated to Mary's memory. It was here, they say, she was born and grew. Here she was betrothed to Joseph and first knew of Jesus' coming. Here on these hills, among those olive trees. Was Herod's fort on that hill, where the Crusader castle stands?

Here the Palestinian village was bombed and bulldozed in 1948. Here the church is not permitted to rebuild and replace a roof long missing. As I sat and prayed I wondered what Mary's song might sound like in this place, on this day. Who are the powerless in this world? Who is bent to hear?

In near by Nazareth we worshipped in the Synagogue Church. Designated by Crusaders as the setting for Jesus' proclamation in Luke's gospel. Who is imprisoned now? Who cannot see? Who cries out for healing? Taking the road up the mountain to the precipice I wondered who is angry now? Who denies his words? Who would cast him off the mountain? Who will not accept love poured out for all?

In the land we count as holy I spoke with many who were likely descendants of Jesus' family. Some perhaps in Mary's line. All seeking peace. For some the peace of Rome. Armed might moving quickly across straight roads. Troublesome partisans punished swiftly, imprisoned regularly, moved in a hierarchy of exile from one encircled community to the next. Enforcing the will of G*d as expressed in scripture through real estate.

For others the peace of Christ. Remnant Christian villagers studying the stories of faith, seeking to be makers of modern miracles. How shall we bring peace in our time in the face of mighty oppressors? How can we help soldiers open themselves to shuttered love?

Here we live out our lives in response to similar questions. Who is Mary now? How is her son heard? Who proclaims good news to the poor, freedom to the imprisoned, relief to the suffering? Who comes in the name of the child of Bethlehem? Who yearns for the assurance of peace and blessing? How shall we work miracles?

Everywhere in the holy land the answer of the villagers was the same. "We do what we can for all the people we can as long as ever we can. We hope for change because we cannot afford the luxury of despair. Our hope is you."

Mine is in you too, and in them. Mary's kin, in Jesus' land, bringing good news to the poor, freedom to the imprisoned, and sight to the blind. May we all, this Christmas, see with the promise of Mary and in the light of Christ. In our home and in theirs.

Pictures from Fall events.



Thanksgiving Offerings, Cathy's
farewell and
Mary Poppins Sing-a-long!

Gifts with Vision



This Christmas you can make a difference through Gifts with Vision which has many options for you to choose to help others in our world. Gifts with Vision is an additional way to support the work of the United Church of Canada's Mission and Service partners. There are gifts for wellness, for education, for poverty and hunger. Many are Canadian programs and others reach out to children in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Catalogues are available in the office or online at giftswithvision.ca

DUC Christmas Hampers



Be a Christmas Angel and help support a family to celebrate Christmas by donating a gift. Please stop by and take a star from the tree in the hallway after December 2nd. On the Star will be the age and gender of the person to buy a gift for or the words "food certificate" We ask that gifts be returned to the office, unwrapped and with the star attached and that gift cards be bought in small denominations of 10.00 or 25.00 dollars so that they can easily be distributed. Please bring the gifts into the office by December 14th. Thank you!

Longest Night Service

Longest Night/ Blue Christmas Service

Friday, 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 surrounding the labyrinth 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



Outreach at DUC—Linda Evans, Outreach Coordinator

In our community there are many folks living without homes, without food and without family for support. Sadly there is only so much we can do but what we are able to do makes a huge difference in many people's lives. People are thankful to be fed a warm hot meal here throughout the week. Each month there are at least 17 dinners served from our church that people can come to and be fed. We also have our Friday coffee hour where people can come and have a hot drink and snack. Some folks call it "Friday breakfast" and are thankful for the conversations and the welcome they receive.

As the colder weather is upon us many more are coming in to warm up and get out of the wet weather. They know our doors are open and it is a safe place to be. It doesn't take much to support those who have so little.

Our rent and hydro subsidies have already helped 21 people/families stay housed and out of the cold. Some needing help with hydro, others paying for rent in hotel rooms or campsites. There just isn't enough housing in the area that low income people can afford.

This December, as in past years, we will be doing up Christmas hampers. We support approximately 12 families by giving a gift for each family member and food cards so that they can purchase enough for a Christmas dinner. They are all so thankful. For those out in the cold that have frequently dropped in and have become part of our outreach family we usually give them a warm pair of socks along with a gift card for food.

Christmas is a time of giving and it doesn't matter whether the gift is a hot meal, a warm pair of socks, a hug or a smile. Knowing there are people in the world who do care can make a huge difference and bring joy into so many people's lives. As in the words we sing in a beloved hymn, "The Servant Song", we are being faithful to the call... "let me be as Christ to you."

A Noel Celebration—Connie Masson, Music Director

Christmas is a time of joyous celebration. Familiar strains of timeless melodies fill the air in churches, homes, stores and concert halls. It is also a season of stories as we recall meaningful traditions, memorable experiences and joyous family moments. Most importantly, Christmas is the season to revisit and celebrate Christ's coming. It is the incarnation story which is front and centre: God's coming to earth to be among us.



There are also other stories within the bigger story: the stories of Zechariah, Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, aged Simeon, and the Magi. Each of these people played significant roles in the context of the larger story. On **December 16th at 7 p.m.** our choir will share A Noel Celebration, which tells these stories and helps us reflect on our own place in the narrative of God's plan.

Christmas is also about OUR story--it is a time to recall the impact of Christ's arrival into your world and life. It is an opportunity for us to rejoice in the news that God has shattered our own night of darkness with good news: Today in the city of David a Savior has been born to you.

A Lively Reading of Charles Dickens “Christmas Carol”

Join us on December 15th at 3:00pm for a lively reading of the Christmas Carol. Back by popular demand! We will once again be taken back in time and hear the words of this Christmas Story as it is presented to us by local “celebrities” By donation at the door.



Advent Eve! - Decorating and Potluck Dinner

Our Advent Messy Church is when we come together to create decorations for our tree, do messy crafts, decorate our halls and sanctuary and share in a story as we prepare for the season of Advent. Folks of all ages are welcome to come and share in the fun and a potluck dinner will follow! Bring your family and friends and if you're able, something to share for the dinner. Saturday Dec 1st from 3:30—6pm Come when you can leave when you must.



Advent Five Week Study – Work of the People

This year's Advent Study will focus our responses and activities through the lenses brought by 5 people reflecting on the meaning of Advent:

In “A Season that Forms” poet, editor and artist, Kelly Hall (one of the authors and editors of “The Voice” Bible translation) reflects on ‘becoming, being born, not filling in an outline, but growing into love’

In “The Risk of Incarnation” author Parker Palmer calls us to attend to the simplicity of the Christmas narrative to think about the risk inherent in the call to be reborn, fully human. On love's need and our own need to be nurtured, loved and tenderly cared for. We'll have a look at one of his books, “On the Brink of Everything”.

In “Coming to Find Us”, author William Paul Young, wonders about the obedience of God to Mary and the presence of God in Jesus. ‘The call to walk through the veil into the face of a love that is consuming.’ Excerpts and thoughts from his book “Lies we Believe about God” will help shape our conversations.

In “A Cup of Longing” author Becca Stevens reflects on the season of loneliness, the longing of the soul for the truth that resonates with the seeker. We'll be looking at excerpts from one of her books “Letters from the Farm”

In “Redefinition, artist and pastor Marlon Hall, sees Advent as an interruption, and interruption as an opportunity to seek what is broken and find the beauty within. He encourages people to take steps to find the beauty already waiting in their lives, to craft an artistic, creative response with their lives. His insights and process will help shape our time together.

Tuesdays, beginning November 20th— at 2pm or 6:30 pm for five weeks.



Holy Transitions and Hello! - Susan Murray, Wellness Coordinator

At this time, we begin our own journey from the Mecca of busy lives to a quieter place to Kindle the Lamps of Advent and remember. Often we begin in this season to sift through our current awareness of what Christ's birth means to us. It can be an opportunity to sift through how we will give, what we would appreciate, how we will connect, with our own busy, sometimes weary engaged selves and with others. As with God's love, as the nourishing source within us, it is a permanent continuous renewal we can call on from within. I value the opportunity of biblical and theological study and reflection, as we learn from each other and allow God to share through us. Picking up on this theme in a song mentioned in the autumn Shalom, sung by many and richly imbued by Louis Armstrong: People say – How do you do, they're really saying – *I Love You*.

Love is our currency of connection, no matter the season, yet takes on intensive focus through the Christmas holiday season. A Blessing it is to enjoy our many families whom we love and share with as a gift of connection.

Sometimes we feel confused, with intense needs or broken up by pain at Christmas time and if this is your journey I encourage you to reach out to others, and lean respectfully into the camaraderie of this church community. You may need more help than can be given here and that is part of transition and our journey as people. We often need a deeper combination of care and we can provide referral to other very committed services in the Cowichan Valley. There is an amazing support service Network in this community and that is a reflection of the generosity and abundance that has developed here in collaboration together over time.

God is our shield. (Psalm 18:30). He gives us the wisdom to make good choices when we ask to hear his Voice and listen with our hearts. We are never alone.

At Christmas last year my two grandchildren, 8 and 11, decided to get on the train, to go to their Oma and Opa's, who own a large mixed crop working farm near Brandon. Their goal was to help with livestock and serve hampers and meals at their local soup kitchen. Although defined by a school project initially, they soon were stilled to confusion. It was the complexity of poverty in a very cold prairie town at a time of abundance for them with gifts to help them learn creatively.

Plucky and very social, both came home with a new layer of query about how to help broaden the ecological care of the land, methods for equitable distribution of food, zero waste gleaning of harvesting and sharing. It was a step up moment for them defining a deeper social responsibility. With it came conversation about good health being a key right for all people and a community commitment..

Confusion about poverty seen in a new way helped them to understand some elements of their assumptions, their culture which believes that hard work brings all. They asked again about what is Church? Why poverty if God is so solid in our lives? Faith, gratitude, do these truly bring abundance?

Their Mum, Gaylen, as a young girl their age, won a Civic award for ecological ingenuity and always had a Fern Gully Club of young gals, for environmental projects. A career now spanning 20 committed years in environmental resource management and geo positioning instruction, those two wags came to a better understanding about Mum's authentic stewardship for the Earth and maybe not so square pan after all?...Hmmm?

The Infinity plus One theory, an ongoing hilarity of chemistry and puppetry theatre demonstrations were presented and brought comic relief. The white Christmas was adorned by silliness and food colouring splashes over homemade igloos in the yard and boisterous chatter on and on...

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even the dinosaur and raptor bin came out and were overheard as they discussed food shortage issues. Growth - God's chatter with them.

On Gabriola where I live part time, with my husband Sandy, is filled with a quiet wooden home, a wood-stove that Freddie the Fire feeder keeps cranked, geological studies for the Gov. NWT, maple leaves, funnelled towards composting and walking in forests and along the beach ocean edges with a wilding-fox terrier. We kayak almost year round, swim in summer and enjoy yoga. A large productive garden and fruit trees yield excellent greens and veggies, apples and berry fruits. A lovely Island with sufficient repose, to think, read and share. Rich music, creative venues and friendly people are abundant on Gabriola, including retreats for yoga and meditation. The United-Anglican Church is now on a new growth phase with a shared ministry agreement and new dynamic Minister. I sing in the choir part time and am enjoying the Communion Lay Assistant and Alter Guild tasks.

For 25 years, I worked both as a Crisis Response Counsellor and planning Health Care services. I'm deeply grateful for the grit and clarity received from this career path and as we bought a 25 acre idle farm in Lakefield and built it into a Workshop Retreat Centre, I learned from the difficult process of letting go... Less overwhelmed by city hectic and a busy mind, I came to value some of the stillness and a productive country garden. Stars were very exceptional at night and we were surrounded by mature cedar, white pine, maple forest yielding syrup and beech trees. There we did cross country ski and canoed lovely lakes with quiet camping sites.

My parents and Father a United Church Elder, located in Oakville and rural surrounding area, supported our Grandparents, with their Accounting and Nursing/Staff Education skills, also United Church faithful after a blending of Methodist and Presbyterian. They bought a country acreage and productive farm, including mixed crops, honey, custom work and strawberry crops with public picking times. The elder women in our family ran cooperage, baked and created a successful custom order business and had many family responsibilities. The men in our family had seven strong brothers, who shared farm equipment, business strategies and had a wicked hockey team. They sold Doc Savage's Hotter than Hell horse radish, riding far and wide for sales. They spent a huge portion of their time around church activities with Board, Presbytery, men's group, mission and services, fund raising, fun socials, building, rebuilding the Church. Sounds like fun... What a blessing it is when people work together amicably to build Churches and Services.

I grew up learning the right wing hockey lead, a farming style hockey {watch those shins-ouch!} and played in senior high school and University. Along with skating, skiing, I led on waterfront with an Ontario United Church summer camp, Sparrow Lake, teaching swimming and canoe tripping. That and thousands of strawberries picked every summer...

In this Wellness Co-ordinator work, I encourage you to share with me your ideas for groups, workshops, events that support your well-being. With appreciation for your engaged lives, I encourage you to reach out for visiting and pastoral care. I will do the same.

Pastoral Care encompasses the fullness of who we are as we support our emotional and spiritual well-being, as we grow and transition, from one part of our lives to another. We have many opportunities to make our health and community stronger. Duncan and this United Church community are remarkable and I feel grace to be a part of this Church now and worship with you.

*Lamps of Fire brightly Lit: the Season calls us **to share a Cup of Kindness.***

Sabeel format Bible Study

A new Bible Study format for our church as practiced in Palestinian villages by Christian Palestinians under the guidance and encouragement of the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Centre.

The mission of the Sabeel Centre is:

“To strive towards theological liberation through instilling the Christian faith in the daily lives of those who suffer under occupation, violence, injustice and discrimination.”

The Vision of the Sabeel Centre is:

“Local Christians, inspired by the life and teachings of Jesus Christ stand for the oppressed, work for justice, engage in peace-building.”

The vision of the Sabeel Centre could almost be summed up as: Seeking Justice, loving kindness and walking humbly with our God. The bible study is aimed at helping the teachings of the bible become relevant in the lives of today’s people. Folk at the Sabeel institute report a new excitement among Palestinian Christians as the church moves from ritual to practice.

So, want to practice?

The format for the Bible Study is simple:

We choose a story.

We read the story.

We learn about the context (social, religious, economic, cultural, etc) of the story.

We ask where the story is happening today.

We ask how we respond to the story today, in light of the teachings of our faith....

Studies will begin next week, November 28th/30th on Wednesday morning at 10am, and Friday evening at 6pm. Friday evening studies may not necessarily be at the church, but will involve refreshments, snacks and comfortable seating. Studies will be scheduled to end 1.5 hours after they begin.

Bells of Peace

Canada made great contributions and sacrifices in the First World War. These were capped by a three-month stretch of victories at the end of the war during that came to be known as “Canada’s Hundred Days.” November 11th, 2018, marked the 100th anniversary of the armistice of November 11, 1918 when church bells, across Europe and Canada, rang out to share the news, the First World War was finally over!

This year, as the sun went down on Remembrance Day, across the country, bells were rung 100 times, at five second intervals, from churches, city halls and at various community locations throughout Canada. This was to honour the sacrifices of Canadians who served in the 1914-1918 War, and to remember the horrors of war, the costs to society, and the hope of peace to come.

Reverend Duncan Barwise led us in prayer and while Joan kept count, David assisted those ringing the bell. It was an important day to gather and take part in remembering.



Children and Youth and Families

Events:

Advent Messy Church – Dec. 1st, 2018 from 3:30-6:00pm

We will be holding our annual Messy Church Advent event on Saturday, Dec. 1st from 3:30-6:00pm here at Duncan United Church in our Heritage Hall. Come on down and join us for a time of decorating the Church for the Christmas season, crafts and games, worship, singing, delicious food at a potluck dinner, and meeting awesome people in a Christ-centered community. All ages are welcome!

Christmas Pageant Sunday – Dec. 16th, 2018

Our annual Christmas Pageant will be held on Sunday, Dec. 16th, 2018 during the 10:00am service. Come join us for the story of the birth of Christ told by the Children and Youth of our Sunday Journey Program.

Community Jam Band! 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month!

We are starting a new ministry here at Duncan United, one of music and fellowship, our new Community Jam Band! We invite everyone who plays an instrument or just wants to jam out to some music to come join us every 1st and 3rd Tuesday of the month here at DUC from 7:00-9:00pm in the Heritage Hall.

Youth Group and Congregational Elders Program

The Youth Ministry here at DUC is looking for volunteers from the congregation to come in as a guest in the Winter and Spring of 2019 and share with us something that means a lot to them or some kind of skill (ex. Cooking, knitting, history, etc.) If this is something that might interest you, please let Sarah know at sarah@duncanunited.org.

Youth Group is seeking new couches for our Youth Group Room!

It has come time to say goodbye to some of our wonderfully well-used couches in our Youth Group room here at Duncan United! We are seeking donations of gently-used or like-new couches for our Youth Group Room downstairs, if you or someone who know has one sitting around that can be donated, please let Sarah know at sarah@duncanunited.org.

One Big Fat Thank you! (aka notes from Sarah)

I'm taking a small little bit of this newsletter to thank everyone in this congregation of Duncan United Church for your gracious support of our Children, Youth, and Families ministries over the past year that I have been in this position. I am proud to say that I have never seen a congregation so supportive of our programs and so willing to volunteer to help out with our little ones! So a huge thank you from me and the team, and keep up your amazing support for our programs!



ADVENT CALENDAR

MESSY CHURCH ADVENT - make decorations, decorate our church hear a story and share in finger food pot luck fun for adults and kids of all ages.

Saturday, December 1st 3:30—6:00 PM

ADVENT I – Sunday, December 2nd - 10:00 am Service

Christmas Craft sale following the service.

-TAIZÉ SERVICE - 7:00 PM

ADVENT II – Sunday, December 9th– 10:00 AM service

White Gift Sunday—donations received for Cowichan Basket Society

The CHRISTMAS CAROL—Saturday, December 15th 3:00 pm

ADVENT III- Sunday, December 16^h – 10 AM Service

Congregational Pageant - 10:00 AM

- CHOIR ADVENT MUSIC EVENING - 7:00 PM

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

Labyrinth & Nativity Scenes 6:00 pm

Service at 7:00 PM

ADVENT IV – Sunday, December 23rd - 10:00 AM Service

CHRISTMAS EVE LESSONS & CAROLS – Monday, December 24th

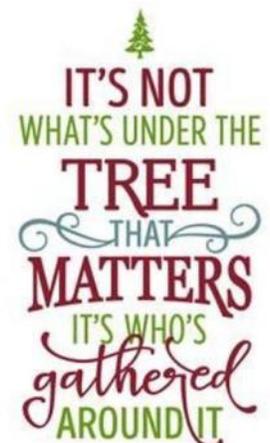
5:00 PM – Family Service

Potluck dinner—5:45 PM between services

7:00 PM - Traditional Service.

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

Potluck Brunch after service



Tiny Wooden Figures

Over in the corner, 'neath the Christmas tree's green,
Are the tiny wooden figures, our Nativity scene.
Each tells a story, each plays its part.
Each holds a special place here in my heart.

Down from the attic, unwrapped with great care,
It just isn't Christmas if they're not there.
They're faded and dented, their paint chipped away,
But the love they stand for is as fresh as today.

And as the years go by and our days grow few,
Outside we grow older, inside we grow new,
And the tiny wooden figures are a symbol of love,
Of the grace and the peace of our God above.

By the side there stands Joseph,
keeping watch in the night
The smile on his face, a reflection of light
In the hay kneels sweet Mary, so gentle and mild
So willing to sacrifice, all for her child.

And as the years go by and our days grow few
Outside we grow older, inside we grow new,
And the tiny wooden figures are a symbol of love
Of the grace and the peace of our God above.

In the hay, Baby Jesus, His arms opened wide.
The same way He lived, the same way He died.
Now He stands up in Heaven, and He holds the door wide,
And He says, "Welcome children! Welcome inside!"

And as the years go by and our days grow few
Outside we grow older, inside we grow new,
And the tiny wooden figures are a symbol of love,
Of the grace and the peace of our God above.

Over in the corner, 'neath the Christmas tree's green,
Are the tiny wooden figures, our Nativity scene.
Each tells a story...each plays its part.
Each holds a special place....here in my heart

Rick W.Cotton



From the Staff



As we approach the season of Advent the staff of Duncan United Church would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and many blessings in the new year. May you be safe, may you be filled with joy and know that you are a valued member of our church family.

Christmas blessings to you
and your families.
Keith, Connie,
Joy, Linda, Sarah & Susan



