

GREY STREET UNITED CHURCH

2023 Advent Newsletter



GREY STREET UNITER

ADVENT and CHRISTMAS 2023



651 Sandhurst Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R2L 1B1
 Email: greyunited@gmail.com Phone: 204-667-9413
 Web site: www.greystreetunitedchurch.com

“How Does a Weary World Rejoice”

Ongoing	<p>Month of Giving – Donations of socks and non-perishable food items are gratefully accepted. Look for the sock bag and bins in the Narthex. Christmas is the season for sharing and giving.</p> 
Sunday, December 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Sunday of Advent - HOPE • In person worship or live stream at 10:30 am. • Lights of Hope campaign begins. 
Sunday, December 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second Sunday of Advent – PEACE • In person worship or live stream at 10:30 am. 
Tuesday, December 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final day for Month of Giving Donations
Sunday, December 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Sunday of Advent – JOY • In person worship or live stream at 10:30 am. 
Wednesday, December 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blue Christmas Service - In person service only at 7:00 pm 
Saturday, December 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combined Fourth Sunday of Advent – LOVE and Christmas Eve - Everyone Welcome • Join us for scripture & carols. • In person Worship or live stream - 7:00pm 
Sunday, December 31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No worship at Grey Street UC today. Rather, we have been invited to join John Black Memorial UC 898 Henderson Hwy at 10:30am for cookies and carols. 

GREY STREET UNITED CHURCH

2023 Advent Newsletter

MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

Who Are Those People?

Mary and Joseph, innkeepers, and shepherds. Heavenly hosts of angels. Ancient characters in the story of our faith; a story told in wild, imaginative, mystical metaphors meant to convey the truth of all time – God is, and God is here. Stories told to communicate to us in a way we can comprehend that God is in our history, is in our present, and will be in our future. God is guiding, cajoling, sometimes despairing, luring us with love towards the lived reality of God's hope for all eternity.

"Who are those people, and why are they there?" They are characters in our Christmas story: characters now so romanticized as to make them almost irrelevant. Characters in a story that is so incredible that it is easier to dismiss them as actors in a fairy tale than to take them seriously regarding what they might mean for us now. These are characters in a story heralding the coming of a deep peace and joy that we thought was beyond our reach. And, they are characters signalling an equal potential for great tumult, for a time of our world being turned upside down, just as theirs was all those years ago. The literalism of the story is not what should perturb or disturb us.

What should make us sit up and take notice, what should make us squirm a little, is not the imagined sexual history between Mary and Joseph and God, but the implications of what each of these characters have for our lives. Whether or not Joseph even existed is less interesting to me than whether I would be able to receive so graciously, as he did, such an incredible tale of God's good news and accompany a friend into that transformation.

It's one thing for the innkeeper to squeeze one more non-paying customer into his barn – it's another thing for me to consider the disruption of including strangers, scruffy ones at that, at our Christmas table. And the angels. These were not the cherubic children of the grade one pageants. A heavenly host in Biblical times was a militarized force. The characters who fill our Christmas stories, indeed most of the stories of our faith, are edgy and challenging, dispelling any notion of cozy comfort. Read with eyes wide open we see the grittiness of their lives, the profundity of their experiences of God. We are reminded that they were as ordinary as you and I, perhaps more challenged in their lives than we can imagine, and yet, and still, they were the people through whom God was able to work.

Perhaps the truth is that God did not choose only them, but that they were the only ones willing to respond to God's invitation. Who are those people? They are ordinary people. People challenged by housing shortages, people challenged by unexpected pregnancies, people grieving tragic changes in their life plans, people challenged by too many demands at work and not enough room in their calendars and their lives for any new joy. They are people in jobs that are less than fulfilling. They are seniors, frustrated at counting on others for rides, feeling shut off and left out. They are like most other people, and with enough openness to allow God's promises to be fulfilled through them.

And why are they there? They are on roof tops and in front yards, on communion tables and on fireplace mantles because in spite of weariness and cynicism, the weary world yearns to know that God's goodness comes still. They are there to remind us that God's goodness comes and clamours for us to risk hope, to risk generosity of spirit and action, to serve as saviours on God's behalf, redeeming our environment and the inequities in our world, and making phone calls to shut ins, and cookies for the homeless, and while we're at it receiving a joy and a peace,

GREY STREET UNITED CHURCH

2023 Advent Newsletter

a hope and a love that are beyond our imagination. Who are they? They are you and I. And Immanuel – God with us.

Thanks be to God.

Comments, The Virgin Birth.
Ginny Coleman

Aside from my theological education, most of my education was science-based. For years, I struggled with the notion of the “virgin” birth, knowing that it was physiologically impossible in human beings.

Did you know that the birth story appears in only 2 of the 4 Gospels (Matthew and Luke) and that the first of the Gospels, Mark, was written some 50+ years after the death of Jesus? It does not include the birth story. None of the Gospel writers ever met Jesus. In fact, none of the writers of the Scriptures ever met Jesus. It was also relatively common in those days to attach a virgin birth story to prominent figures of the day. And so, I struggled.

Then I realized that the most critical part of the story of Jesus’ arrival was not whether his conception was virginal but that he came into the world. Whether he came via sperm and egg or via the visit of the angel upon Mary, no longer is of great significance for me. Jesus came, lived, and died in our human world and those are historical facts. How he lived his life and what that life taught us about how to live our lives with integrity, compassion, love, justice, and faith is what is important.

And so, I stopped struggling. Could his birth have been brought about by immaculate conception? Perhaps. Who am I, or any human, to understand the mystery that is God? Could his birth have been brought about by sperm and egg? Perhaps. Again, who am I, or any human, to understand the mystery that is God-given life?

I no longer struggle, and I can now enjoy the whole of the Christmas story, celebrating the arrival of the baby Jesus, and all that followed.

Study Opportunity

Thinking about the core values of our faith, we will be offering a study on Zoom, beginning in mid January, which has us consider four core values of our faith. This is a study which can be done individually with the opportunity to gather together for discussion. Reading materials will be provided to all who are interested. Keep watch for more details and dates!

GREY STREET UNITED CHURCH

2023 Advent Newsletter

Report from the Leadership Team

The Grey Street annual general meeting (AGM) in May was unsuccessful in securing a volunteer(s) to Chair our Leadership Team, therefore, the team agreed to have a rotating chair. Each month, one person from the leadership team chairs the meeting.

John Sawchuk was the first volunteer and chaired the May meeting; Cheryl Palylyk offered to hold the June meeting. Karen Maxwell generously agreed to oversee things for the summer, though no meetings are held during July and August, Karen was available, if needed. September's meeting was chaired by Wendy Neplyk, October by Eleanor Harrison, November was Greg Holowka, and Luane Campbell will chair in December.

The rotating chair is working, but it is not an ideal situation. It would be wonderful if someone would take on this role to assist and complete our team. Young, old, experienced, or not, the team is terrific to work with and the position comes with a lot of assistance. Two people co-chairing is also an option!

The job of the chair is a support position for the team members, keeping up to date on the activities of the team from one meeting to the next; planning and chairing the monthly meetings and Visioning Day (held in January) and the annual general meeting, and writing a report (like this one) twice a year.

A brief highlight of items discussed and actioned by the Leadership Team are as follows:

- Spring
 - supported the search and hire of our minister, Ginny.
 - Kept in contact with Glenn Poole as he oversaw the repairs to the north-side of the building (damaged by a vehicle)
- Autumn
 - Approved the purchase of the Children's Church curriculum.
 - Purchased a new desktop computer for Administrative Assistant
 - Assisted John Sawchuk with decisions regarding the new north ramp.
 - Selected Nick Palylyk to oversee snow clearing and lawn maintenance.
 - Agreed to have our sound system assessed.
 - Voted and approved the Category 3 Remit (see Regional Representative Report)
 - Support the need to review keyholders and alarm codes.

Please, seriously consider chairing our team. You will share, learn, and have active participation with where our Community of Faith is journeying toward.

Submitted by
Luane Campbell and Brent Poole

GREY STREET UNITED CHURCH

2023 Advent Newsletter

Worship Report - Christmas Edition

*Prepare the way of the Lord! Prepare the way of the Lord!
Make a straight path for him, make a straight path; prepare the way of the Lord!*

Greetings from the Worship Team,

What a difference a year makes. Our fall worship season began September 10 with a welcome to our minister Virginia (Ginny) Coleman. We are blessed that Ginny loved us enough to move from her job as our Pastoral Relations Oversight minister to working with us half time until June 2024. Being in a half time position Ginny is not required to preach every Sunday. This means periodically the Worship Team is responsible for arranging for Sunday worship pulpit supply. A Big Thank You to Millie Lewis LLWL, Diane McKenty LLWL in training and Wilma MacMillan for creating and leading worship on those Sundays.

Our worship continues to be filled with wonderful music with thanks to the dedicated group of volunteers that love to sing. Special shout out to Wilma MacMillan for her leadership. Thank you also goes out to our pianists Dorothy Caldwell, Deena Grier and Wilma MacMillan for sharing the responsibility of playing the piano each Sunday.

Last but certainly not least, thank you to John Sawchuk and Bob Logan for their ongoing technical support providing sound, live stream, and recorded services each week.

Now we turn the church calendar to Advent. The first Sunday of Advent is Sunday December 3. Advent marks the beginning of the liturgical year for most churches in the Western tradition. The color blue is used during Advent symbolizing hope.

This year our TBJIGGN communities of faith have agreed on “How does a Weary World Rejoice” as the Advent theme. In the spirit of collaboration each community of faith will share a common advent candle lighting liturgy, song and prayers during Sunday worship that reflects this theme. Join us each Sunday in our Advent journey, discovering ways to find Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love in this weary world.

This year Advent 4 and Christmas Eve fall on the same day, Sunday December 24. We will have one service at 7pm. Please invite your family and friends to join us as we celebrate the Birth of the Christ Child in song and story.

As you journey to the stable this Advent, we hope you discover many ways to Rejoice in this Weary World we live in.

Blessings for a Beautiful Christmas

Cathy Welby
Chair of the Worship Team

GREY STREET UNITED CHURCH

2023 Advent Newsletter

Blue Christmas Service
Grey St United Church
Invites you, your family, and friends to join us for our Blue Christmas service in person at
Grey Street United Church
651 Sandhurst Avenue
Wednesday December 20, 2023@ 7 pm

This special service of remembrance, music, scripture & candlelight is offered as an opportunity for those that need a quiet center at Christmas time. A time to remember their loved ones no longer with them, loss of health and/or job, or a step away from the busyness of the season.

Wishing you Hope, Peace, Joy & Love this Christmas Season

Ministry and Personnel Committee (M&P)

<i>Minister, Virginia (Ginny) Coleman</i>	<u>Liaisons:</u> Wendy Neplyk
<i>Office Administrator, Stacy Oduala</i>	Karen Maxwell
<i>Caretaker, Sandra Melgar</i>	Wendy Neplyk
<i>Music Director and Accompanist, Wilma MacMillan</i>	Karen Maxwell
<i>Sunday School Teacher, Vacant</i>	Gemma Eko-Davis

M & P is pleased to welcome Ginny Coleman as our new Minister and Stacy Oduala as our new Office Administrator. We look forward to working with them and have enjoyed getting to know them both better these past few months.

All vacant positions are filled except for the Sunday School Teacher. Gemma has reached out to Christian Studies and will contact Canadian Mennonite University and University of Winnipeg and send them our posting. We have also sent it to our fellow churches and placed in our newsletter and web page. Thank you for your persistence and work on this posting.

We thank Bob Logan, our former Office Administrator for helping to train Stacy this fall. And would also like to thank Karen Maxwell who has also been a big help with orientating Stacy to the financial side of her new position and Karen's continued excellent work on our financial statements.

Wilma MacMillan has kindly agreed to lead the choir for some of our worship Sunday, and a Memorandum of Understanding has been signed for the practice dates and Sundays she is leading. We will also have other individuals which are available to play piano when Wilma is not available.

GREY STREET UNITED CHURCH

2023 Advent Newsletter

Sandra Melgar has signed her contract for the period of October 1, 2023 - September 30, 2024. She has been working hard to keep Grey Street clean and tidy, and we always appreciate her constant and pleasant presence.

Glenn Poole has done his magic with many repairs around our church, which has kept our costs down.

Thank you all for your commitment to our Little Church with a Big Heart, and know that we have the gift of faith, love, joy, and peace this Christmas.

Respectfully submitted.

Wendy Neplyk



Chair Ministry and Personnel Committee Grey Street United Church

Mission and Service Report

Can you believe the Advent Season is almost upon us...I was rather shocked when they announced it was time to get our submissions in for the Advent Newsletter. Truly where did this year go? I find myself in awe as the fall slowly leaves us and wisps of snow showing signs here and there of wanting to stay. Our month of "Thanksgiving" has just been announced and our Little Church with a Big Heart is called into action once again to rise to the challenge of helping keep families fed, clothed, and knowing they are loved.

During the week of November 04 -11, 2023 in honor of Remembrance Day, we ran a video which in part shared the story behind the poem "In Flanders Fields". I hope you all had a chance to see it. Our website is a good place to keep in touch with all that is happening.

On November 19, 2023, we are putting on a "Souper" Sunday with good will offerings going to the Mission & Service fund. Last year's event raised \$435.00 towards our annual goal and your M & S enthusiasts are looking forward to seeing everyone after the service. Please invite your family and friends to a wonderful service and to partake in "Souper" Sunday. Let's see if we can meet or beat last year's total.

In Late November/early December our yearly tradition of "Lights of Hope|" will be announced, along with our Gifts with Vision magazine.

"Thank you" to everyone who continues to support M&S either by PAR contributions, on the offering plate, or at fund raising events such as the one mentioned above.

Respectfully Submitted

Cheryl Palylyk & Deborah Holowka

GREY STREET UNITED CHURCH

2023 Advent Newsletter

Regional Representative Report

This church year every congregation, governing body, and region of the United church of Canada has been expected to vote on Remit 1, Establishing an Autonomous National Indigenous Organization.

Approving Remit 1 will enable indigenous congregations, within the United Church of Canada, to define their own structure and processes. It acknowledges Indigenous Peoples' rights to their own spiritual identities and to self-determination. This has the potential to create a new kind of relationship. In the words of the National Indigenous Council, the United Church of Canada will be moving "from Mission to Indians... towards being partners in God's call to all the earth".

Grey Street United Church Leadership Team discussed this and voted, unanimously, to support Remit 1 at our November 15, 2023, meeting. We have sent our vote results to the authorities and expect that Remit 1 will become part of the permanent structure of the United Church of Canada.

Submitted by Deborah Holowka
Grey Street UC Regional rep to the Prairie to Pine Conference.

Ministry Profile Team

After taking a break and not meeting in the summer, the Ministry Profile Team is up and working hard!

We discovered that Patrick Woodbeck (of the Big Red Church/Gordon King Memorial) is now our oversight minister. Because we hired Ginny, she is not able to do our oversight.

And, because the Ministry Profile Team also acted as a Search Team for the hire of Ginny, it is our responsibility to put together the Covenanting Service for Ginny. We have been working hard to make the service reflective of our journey and hope you will come and be present on this very meaningful day.

The team has reviewed the results of the survey done at our Annual General Meeting. A few of the important information items that the team collected are being used as a guide for collaboration talks.

These items are as follows:

- The majority of Grey Street people would like to continue to worship in our building.
- Music is an important part of our services.
- Having a minister is important, but not necessary to lead worship every Sunday.
- Flexibility in the type of worship service offered ranked high.
- Technology can play a part in our worship services.

GREY STREET UNITED CHURCH

2023 Advent Newsletter

The team accepted an invitation from Immanuel United for a meeting on October 12 to continue conversations with their Looking Ahead Group. Representatives from Big Red Church, John Black, Birds Hill, Immanuel, and Grey Street were in attendance. Each Community of Faith (CoF) gave a presentation about where they were at on their collaboration journey, answering three advance questions that were sent to us prior to the meeting. Options of different forms of collaboration were presented and then each CoF discussed which option might work best for them. Findings were reported to the larger group and the meeting ended with the recommendation that individual CoFs begin a conversation with another CoF they felt might be a candidate for collaboration.

Our team also had requests from two other CoFs asking to consider them for collaboration partners. After discussion, it was decided not to pursue conversation with these two CoFs as the team felt they were not a good fit for Grey Street.

Grey Street has extended an invitation to three of our north-east Winnipeg churches to meet individually for a get-to-know you session. We received responses from all three CoFs and are currently making arrangements to meet and are developing questions that would help us determine which of these congregations might make good collaboration partners with us.

We will hold an informal information session with our congregation, once the meetings with the groups have been completed, to share, in greater detail, where we are on our collaboration journey.

Luane Campbel

Outside Church User Groups Report

The number of outside user groups using our facility has remained unchanged over the past year. We are happy to be able to continue to share our venue with the following groups:

East Winnipeg Unida Christian Church

This is the 4th year that we are pleased to share our facility with East Winnipeg Unida Christian Church. They meet every Sunday for worship throughout the year (summer included) from 2:00 pm – 7:00 pm. They also have weekly music rehearsals, and regular Bible Study and Youth Group meetings.

The Doughnators

The Doughnators are a nonprofit group of volunteers who make and sell perogies to help provide funding for shelter to animals in need. They are a large group that use our kitchen facility twice a month (every second weekend). They also do community outreach by providing meals for folks in need at special times of the year (Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter). Grey Street United Church has been pleased to partner with The Doughnators with their community outreach projects.

GREY STREET UNITED CHURCH

2023 Advent Newsletter

Kookums Pantry

Kookums Pantry uses our kitchen facility several times a week preparing Bannock and other tasty goods to sell at local markets.

Sonolux Choir

Sonolux Choir is a group of volunteers who perform at various venues throughout the city. They rehearse in our sanctuary every Monday from 6:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. Keep your eyes open for Sonolux concerts offered during the year.

Embers and Girl Guides

The Embers and Girl Guides are long time users of our facility. The Embers meet on Mondays from 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm and the Guides meet Tuesdays from 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

A few ‘maintenance’ issues occurred this fall and they have all been resolved thanks to Stacy’s dedication and excellent work (i.e., making the calls and coordinating workers to do the repairs when she is in the building).

These maintenance issues were:

- (i) our large cooler started to leak water inside the unit.
- (ii) one of our ovens stopped working.
- (iii) our grand piano required tuning.

We are thankful to all our outside user groups for choosing Grey Street United Church as their service venue and for giving ‘life’ to our building beyond the needs of our congregation.

Wishing all of you a relaxing and enjoyable Christmas Season.

Respectfully submitted.

Brent Poole

Grey Street United Church - Outside User Group Coordinator

Interest Group Report

We are very fortunate to have many Interest Groups in our “little church” that keep us functioning weekly.

Our choir, directed by Wilma MacMillan lead the congregation in singing the hymns every Sunday is one of these Interest Groups.

Our Worship Team led by Cathy Welby provide us with a variety of creative ideas for our weekly Sunday Services.

Loaves and Fishes Interest Group made sandwiches and cookies for One Just City who feed the less fortunate in our city.

GREY STREET UNITED CHURCH

2023 Advent Newsletter

Luane Campbell, Cathy Welby and Eleanor Harrison made pumpkin and apple pies that we enjoyed at Thanksgiving.

The Ministry Profile Team led by Luane Campbell are working with other community churches to find a good fit for us to collaborate with so we can hire a part time minister next year.

If you have an idea or special interest in starting your own Interest Group, please email me at eharrison7@gmail.com and I will provide you with the necessary information to get started. If you would like to be a part of any of the above Interest Groups, please speak with the above people. They would be delighted to have your help.

Respectfully submitted by,
Eleanor Harrison

Refugee Interest Group Report (RIG)

On July 6, 2023, Fahima Fazely celebrated one year in Winnipeg! She has accomplished so much in this time. Here are a few highlights:

- Fahima's name was put forward by the McLeod Adult Education Centre as one of eight Manitobans nominated for the 2023 Council of the Federation Literacy award.
- Fahima is very appreciative of the support and encouragement she is receiving from her teachers, classmates, and friends. She wants to complete her grade 12 and is continuing with her schooling, that includes English and computer classes.
- She has passed the written portion of a beginner's drivers test, taken First Aid / CPR course and a Food Handler's certification course.

Employment has been a serious concern to Fahima. It is difficult to find employment in Canada, without any experience in this country. But fortunately, she has landed, not only one, but two part-time jobs! Her first job is as a custodian at Immanuel United Church. Fahima's was extremely excited and announced, "my first job in Canada is in a holy place." Within two weeks, she was offered another position in the Food and Nutrition Department at Concordia Village (in the kitchen). Both places of employment are flexible enough that she can continue her schooling. She is so grateful for these opportunities.

I had taken Fahima to a dental appointment this spring and discovered she was missing most of her back teeth. I called up, Grey Street's own dentist, Jamie Swiskoski to see if she could help. Jamie generously made the partial that Fahima needed. Thank you, Jamie! The Bahaduri family feels very supported by their family and friends they have made with the RIG group.

I was also fortunate enough to be invited to the fifth birthday of Smah on April 30, 2023. Smah, her sister Snah (age three), welcomed a baby brother on September 5th. The healthy baby is named ELHAM, meaning 'good news'. Mom, Mawji and dad, Shafiq felt the name reflected their feeling about their new life in Canada. Snah was not sure if she wanted a baby but is now quite happy to show him off.

GREY STREET UNITED CHURCH

2023 Advent Newsletter

Living in the IRCOM apartment complex offers support for childcare while Shafiq and Mawji take English classes and Smah started kindergarten at Dufferin School this fall. The family went on a number of outing this summer to the beaches and continues to thrive.

The Loaves and Fishes interest group has decided to make our newcomer families recipients, as part of the Month of Giving this year. We will make hampers containing staple foods (and maybe a few treats) for the families. Thank you for your continued prayers and support.

Luane Campbell

Month of Giving

This year the Loaves and Fishes Interest group is pleased to take on the leadership of our annual Month of Giving (Nov 12 to Dec 12). Each year, several activities are selected for you the congregation to take part in.

This year the activities include:

- Agape Table - Providing socks, soup ingredients, sandwiches.
- Cookies and juice boxes for the Doughnators/Bear Clan annual Christmas lunch delivery to encampments.
- Rossbrook House – snacks for kids on the go
- North Point Douglas Drop In – sandwiches and winter wear.
- Elmwood Community Resource Center - Nonperishable food items.

Suggested list of items is:

- Canned fish and poultry — tuna, salmon, chicken, or turkey, packed in water.
- Canned fruit and vegetables, packed in their own juices.
- Canned stew, chili, or brown beans.
- Peanut butter.
- Whole-grain pasta or whole-wheat pasta.
- Baby food and infant formula.
- Rice — brown, converted, or parboiled.
- Canned spaghetti sauce or tomatoes.
- Cereal, preferably high in fiber and not sugar-coated.
- Canned soup, particularly lentil, pea, or vegetable soups.

If you are unable to get out to shop but would like to contribute, donations via cash, cheque or e-transfer are always welcome.

Donations can be dropped off at the Month of Giving corner in the Narthex. If you are wanting to stop by during the week, please phone the church office (204-667-9413) ahead of time to ensure someone is at the church.

Thanking you in advance for your support.

Cathy Welby on behalf of the Loaves and Fishes Interest Group.

Season's



Greetings