

# Waiting Expectantly

I don't know about you, but I do not like waiting. I think it is natural that when you want something, you want it now. This is part of what makes the season of Advent so frustrating. We want to skip right to the manger, to Christ among us and the joy and hope found in his birth. However, for us to be truly ready to receive his gifts we need to get ourselves ready, so that when he arrives we will not be rushing around to clean the house, as if a relative just stopped by for a surprise visit. Advent allows us to prepare our hearts and minds to welcome Christ, and it is a time to reflect on our lives to see what needs to be moved out to make space.

Part of Advent is to listen to our longing for Christ and the abundant life he calls us to. Lives filled with hope, peace, joy and love. In this season of to-do lists and I-want lists, listening to what we long for most deeply can give us a sense as to how ready we are to welcome Christ. What do you long for?

Christian mystic Meister Eckhart wrote *"The soul must long for God in order to be set aflame by God's love: but if the soul cannot yet feel the longing, then it must long for the longing. To long for the longing is also from God."*

In the bible, leading up to the time when Jesus was born, we hear from the prophets about a deep longing for God to be manifest. The call, "how long must we wait?" rings clearly. There was a deep longing for God's promises of peace, where lion will lay with the lamb and no one would be hungry or afraid. A longing for a world where all will be loved and accepted for who they are, and their gifts affirmed. A longing for justice and mercy to prevail. A longing for someone to take the messed up world and turn it around, the longing for God to show up and make it better.

Looking out at our world, I know that longing all too well. As we read the prophets, I can see the world they describe as God's vision and I want it desperately to be our reality, not just words on a page. It is in this place that God continues to speak to my heart, fanning me to act in ways that help to birth this reality into our present moment. It is in the recounting of these visions and promise that they will come, that I find renewed energy to keep seeking the kingdom of God and a deeper connection with our Lord.

My hope is that this Advent season, you may also long for God with all your heart, all your mind and all your soul, and that on Christmas day, You will find your heart ablaze with all Christ offers.

As we see the first glimmer of the Christmas star, and journey towards it, may you have a blessed season. - Rev. Michelle

St Paul's United Church

Advent – Christmas Newsletter

November 22, 2022



## Inside This Edition:

Message from the Board	2
Christmas Poem	2
A Time of Celebration	3
Worship at St. Paul's	4
Ministry and Personnel	4
Message from our Treasurer	5
2022 Budget Update	5
Downtown United Project	5
Sounds of the Season	6
Beware of Scams	6
Upcoming Events	7
The St. Paul's 190th Tree	7
Serving Others Update	8
Office Update	8



## The Life After Today

Glad music filled the Christmas sky,  
As Mary sang her lullaby.  
This gentle girl has much to bear,  
those fingers twining in her hair  
will grasp the hideous and profane;  
this present joy foreshadows pain.  
The manglers wood becomes a cross;  
our present gain becomes a loss.  
The swaddling bands so snug tonight,  
become the shroud that holds him tight.  
The angles sing o'er his head,  
Announce the news, "He is not dead!"  
A borrowed stable, and upper room,  
Foreshadow but and empty tomb.  
O baby dear, on Mary's breast,  
Your infant cry foretells the rest.  
From Bethlehem to Calvary,  
a distance that will set us free.

By Ivan Gregan, a former youth minister here at St. Paul's, and currently serving Port Wallis United in Dartmouth, NS. This poem was printed in Gathering Advent-Christmas – Epiphany, 2016-2017

## A Message From the Board

The Church Board is made up of elected individuals from the congregation. They are tasked with representing the congregation, listening for the Holy Spirit and acting as elders in the church community. For almost a year, the Board has been working together to oversee the congregation's life. In this time the chair became open. Debbie Allison and Donna Chauvin were appointed as our Co-chairs.

Over the course of the year, we connect with committees of the church, through liaisons who report on committee activities and respond to concerns and ideas raised by members of the congregation.

We have also been progressing through a review of our committee structures and responsibilities, to identify any gaps and clarify roles.

While other groups of the church focus on individual areas of specialization, the Board takes a wider view, seeking to care for the congregation as a whole.

In the New Year, as we face the challenges of being a church in a changed and changing world, the steps we need to take to not only survive, but continue to impact our community will be our prime focus. This will include discerning our unique place and mission within Fredericton, engaging with the Downtown United Project and exploring and supporting new opportunities that come our way.

All of the Board members have agreed to serve because we love our church community and want to make a difference in our church's life. Should you feel called to this important work, we hope that you will connect with either of our chairs or Rev. Michelle to express your interest.

We appreciate the support of the congregation and ask that you hold us all in prayers as we work on your behalf.







## A Time of Celebration

On November 6th, we gathered to give thanks as we marked the 190 years of life that this congregation has had. We have a varied history, and as with every organization as old as we are, there have been periods of challenge and change and periods of flourishing and growth. Celebrating our anniversary allows us to affirm that God has been with us through it all and will continue to be faithful.

Alexis and Sharon made the piano and organ sing as we gathered for worship. The service started off with the choir processing in to Holy, Holy, Holy. We lit an Anniversary candle and remembered both big and little ways we have spread Christ's light. Rev. Mike Bravener was our guest preacher and preached passionately on God's desire for a people, the church. Then later in the service he provided special music singing "I Believe". Hearts were warmed, and joy was high as so many of us gathered together. After service we shared in continued fellowship, of course with cake. There were several displays with information and historic images of the church. It was a wonderful celebration!

A big thank you is extended to the 190th committee who pulled together all the pieces and put such passion into making the day special. If you missed the service you can find it on our Youtube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCG2wvjhQzgAm-2Co5WvRkmA>

Should you wish to make a special offering in recognition of our 190th Anniversary, donations are still being accepted in the church office.

May God Bless us with another 190 years  
of faithful Service!





## Worship At St. Paul's

Jesus said, "where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there". Worship is always enriched with more participants! It was wonderful to see so many people for the first time since COVID began, at our anniversary service. I want to take this opportunity to invite you to join us in the beautifully decorated sanctuary this Advent. We continue encourage people to mask during the service, however currently only requiring masks for signing and when not seated.

Our worship committee, works with Rev. Michelle to shape worship and foster engagement in the leading of worship. A big thank you to everyone who has served by reading scripture, greeting, those who shared stories as part of our anniversary service, who have lit candles, provided other readings and helped preside. Your engagement makes worship more powerful.

The worship committee reflects on all aspects of our worship, makes suggestions on what we could do differently and how we can improve worship. We also listen to concerns and ideas from the congregation. This Remembrance Day, we included the laying of two new wreaths, one for those who served from our indigenous community and one for those who are currently serving. I would like to also thank Rev. Michelle for her great-leadership, enthusiasm and attitude. Her support really helps me in my position as chair of the Worship Committee. Should you wish to join our team let me know.

There are a couple of changes coming this Advent/Christmas season. The first is that on Christmas Eve there will only be two services, a 3pm family service and 7pm Candlelight service. There will be an opportunity for those seeking Christmas communion to partake after the 7pm service. The other decision was that there will be no services on Christmas Day or New Years Day which both fall on Sundays this year. We will however, be hosting a 4pm New Years Eve Service in lieu of Sunday. We hope to see you this season as we wait and welcome Christ!

- Roger Miller

## Ministry and Personnel

Our committee is one of two required by the United Church. It has responsibility for support and consultation for matters involving staff, overseeing the relationship of staff to pastoral charge and supervising ministry personnel and lay staff.

The M&P committee has been busy "checking in" with staff at St. Paul's. Our focus has been to foster positive work culture through building healthy and respectful relationships. We have also been reviewing job descriptions, providing feedback and providing assistance so that the work for the church is completed in a timely and professional manner.

St. Paul's is blessed with a staff that is committed to their work and we are thankful for this work in our community of faith.

If you have questions, concerns or wish to share celebrations of our staff please contact us.

Your M&P committee Lois Walker, Blaine Irving and Anne Krause.



## Message from our Treasurer

Let me begin by **THANKING** everyone who supports the daily activities of our church. And a further message of gratitude to those who supported our 190th anniversary with a special gift.

Some of the anniversary gifts came in the form of securities. By donating publicly traded securities (stocks, mutual funds, bonds, etc.) directly to St. Paul's, you can eliminate the capital gains tax that you would normally pay when the securities are sold, while still receiving a tax receipt for the fair market value of the donation.

St. Paul's has an investment advisor at Nesbitt Burns, Andrew Craik, and his office can receive a transfer of investments for St. Paul's and direct it to general operations, restoration or whatever special project you prefer. Please contact me or Meghan in the office with any questions.

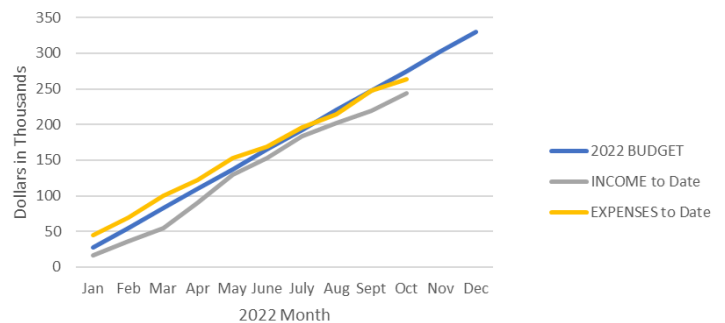
Remember there are only 5 weeks to finalize your giving's for the 2022, tax year.

## 2022 Budget Update

We are managing to keep our expenses on track with our budget projections. However, our income is not reaching our expectations. As of the end of October, we are about \$84,000 short. We know that December is a big giving month, so please help us meet expenses by steady Sunday offerings and special Christmas and year-end donations.

- Alanna Palmer

TRACKING OUR BUDGET



## Downtown United Project Update

In the spring of 2022, a committee of eight people was created, comprising of 4 people from each of the two churches. Our mandate is to explore the possibilities of collaboration between the two churches. We have met several times over the past few months, and have selected and hired a consultant group named Credence & Co. to facilitate this process.

We have met with them, through Zoom, to discuss how we might develop a collaborative process that will produce a joint project to serve downtown Fredericton, as well as serve as a model for possible future collaboration.

For your information, the following is a paragraph prepared by Credence & Co., as an introduction to our congregation:

*Credence & Co. is an organization devoted to helping congregations and workplaces thrive. They focus on facilitating organizational health, discernment, visioning, strategic planning, conflict transformation, mediation, diversity work and more! Your consultants for this process (Marijke Strong and Cathy Stewart) are both ordained ministers with extensive experience guiding congregational processes.*

It is our intent to follow this collaborative process which will begin with an online survey (also be available in hard copy). The survey will go live on January 8th and everyone in the two congregations will be invited to participate in this survey which will contribute to the direction of this joint venture and we are hoping for participation of 100% of our congregation. Keep an eye out in early January for more information.

- Ralph Simpson St. Paul's Downtown United Project Co-Chair



## Sounds of the Season

One can not imagine Christmas without the familiar and comforting hymns that profoundly share the deep meaning of this season. As we move our way towards Christmas, we will slowly shift from Advent waiting hymns to Christmas carols. Downtown United will also be hosting a Carol Sing on December 17th, 2pm here at St. Paul's.

While many of our Christmas songs make perfect sense, have you ever wondered about the 12 days of Christmas. What in the world do leaping lords, French hens, swimming swans and a partridge in a pear tree have to do with Christmas?

From 1558-1829, Roman Catholics in England were not permitted to practice their faith openly. Someone during this era wrote this carol as a catechism song for young Catholics. Imbedded in the lyrics was a secret meaning known only to members of their church. Each element in the carol is a code for a religious reality the children could remember. Ready to join the crowd of those who know?

The Partridge in a pear tree was Jesus Christ.

Two turtledoves were the Old and New Testaments.

Three French hens stood for faith, hope and love.

The four calling birds were the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

The five golden rings recall the Torah or Law, the first five books of the Old Testament.

The six geese a-laying stood for the six days of creation.

Seven swans a-swimming represented the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit - Prophecy, Serving, Teaching, Exhortation, Contribution, Leadership, and Mercy.

The eight maids a-milking were the eight beatitudes.

Nine ladies dancing stood for the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit - Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness and Self-Control.

The ten lords a-leaping were the ten commandments.

The eleven pipers piping stood for the eleven faithful disciples.

The twelve drummers drumming symbolized the twelve points of belief in the Apostles Creed

- Excerpt from "Ye Ole' Quire Loft".



## Beware of Scams

This time of year when our hearts are open, it is important to be aware of who and what you are giving to. Too many people have fallen prey to scams that sound real. Some tips to avoid scams:

- Plan your donations and be the one to initiate giving
- If a request for money or gift cards seems odd, check directly with the organization or individual
- Never give out personal details to people you are not 100% sure of.
- Say you need time, don't fall into "urgent" requests. Reputable organizations will not pressure you. Check out the information you're given to make sure it is real.

Also, let us take the opportunity to remind everyone that church staff will never ask you for donations or gift cards to be sent directly to them. Should you ever get a call or email of this nature, report it to the police and please don't respond.

## Upcoming Events — Don't Miss a Moment of This Season @ St Paul's

November 27	10:30am	Advent 1 Worship with Communion
December 4	10:30am	Advent 2 With special offering for Campus Ministry FundScrip orders due — last chance before Christmas!
	1:00pm	Blessing of the St. Paul's Tree. Botanic Gardens (see below)
	3:00pm	Candlelight Classix Concert with Sharon Pond - tickets in office
December 11	10:30am	Advent 3
December 17	2:00pm	Downtown United Christmas Carol Sing hosted at St. Paul's
December 18	10:30am	Advent 4
December 21	7:00pm	Longest Night - Reflective service of Downtown United
December 24	3:00pm	Family Christmas Eve Service
	7:00pm	Candlelight Christmas Eve Service
December 31	4:00pm	New Years Eve Service
January 8	10:30am	First worship service of the New Year and Downtown United Project survey starts



### The St Paul's 190th Tree

The symbol of the tree of life was incorporated into our anniversary celebrations. It was to symbolize the growth and faith over the years and a statement that we will continue to impact and grow in the world. The tree showed up on your invitation and banner, but did you know that there is a real tree?

A 190cm Eastern White Pine was planted in the Botanic Garden, in celebration of our years of impacting Fredericton. It was decided to plant the tree off our grounds as a way to point the community to our presence beyond our walls, and provide a passive invitation to check us out.

Evergreens have long been symbolic of life and growth, early Christians brought them into the sanctuaries to symbolize everlasting life in Christ. Evergreen trees have also been used to share our faith, such as the three points of the tree reminding us to the three faces of the trinity and the fact that the tree doesn't lose its needles pointing to the unchanging nature of God.

You are invited to a tree blessing on December 4 @ 1pm. The tree was planted across from the perennial garden. From the Prospect Street parking lot it is about a 3 minute walk.



## Serving Others in Christ's Name

As a congregation, we make a difference in our community through partnerships and our own programs. Currently, in house programs are the Pantry and Brown-bag programs. In partnership, we support Campus Ministry, the Angle Tree gift giving, and support learners obtaining their GED. Look at who we touch:

As of November 18th, The Pantry is serving 116 clients. This number is made up of 25 single women, 48 single men, 8 couples, 18 families, 17 single parents and included in this number are 81 children. It also includes a few homeless people.

248 bag lunches were handed out to hungry homeless people, as well as others in need, through the office between September 1st and November 22nd. Meghan hands out as many as 10 bags some mornings.



This year, through our partnership with the Angel Tree program, we will have brought smiles to 40 children this Christmas, whose families were unable to afford a Christmas present for them.

The GED preparation program, which meets in our building, has 6 learners registered in their program this year. We are supporting people in charting a new future through providing space rent free.

We are part of the UNB Campus Ministry, and

through this we offer support to the 10,000 students and staff at UNB and beyond through. Our contributions to Campus Ministry (FCCMC) include space for the council to meet, representation on the council and financial support.

## Office Update

Please note that the office will be closed on December 23 and reopen January 3rd

Need to drop an envelope off at the church office but it is closed? Use the secure mail box beside the York Street door.

With year end coming up and a full Christmas season, we are asking if you can, to visit the Church on Tuesday, Wednesday or Friday. This will allow for focused time for completing financial and service related work on the remaining days. Thank you so much for your help!

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