

ADVENT
2022

CHURCH @ HOME

staying connected with God,
each other, and ourselves

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red deer lake
united church

hello church,

One of my favourite things to do is cook. I inherited that joy from my dad, and it got nurtured along the way by all the chefs I worked with at restaurants during grad school. And while I do love eating whatever I make, that's not why I love cooking. I love cooking because of the preparation. I love the smells, the textures, the techniques, the rhythm of cutting and stirring, and the mystery of how all the different parts come together to create something (sometimes) delicious and nourishing. I love cooking because of the preparation. I didn't know this till I heard what my chef friend Adam would tell his staff who got stuck with the

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boring duties of cutting up vegetables: “good food starts here!” So often, something is only as good as the amount of work you put into it. It’s true, isn’t it? The food I enjoy making always tastes better.

We like to think of Advent as counting down to Christmas. That’s true but it’s also not. It’s more something we do during Advent than what Advent actually is. And what it is is the time when we prepare for Christmas. Instead of jumping right into Christmas and celebrating it once December hits, Advent is when we slow down to remember what Christmas is all about and why we need it. It’s when we remember that if Christmas is about anything, it’s about the truth at the very heart of our faith: that a light is shining because God is here, with us and for us. Cause here’s the thing that happens when we actually do Advent: Christmas gets so much better.

So, as we begin this season of preparation, this book is for you. It’s to help you do Advent intentionally and purposefully so that we can end up experiencing the full power, beauty, and meaning of Christmas.

So, my friends, as you go throughout this book, may you not jump right ahead into Christmas, but take the time to prepare, knowing that’s how Christmas comes alive, and may you know we are with you in this, even though we may be a part.

Happy Advent
and may grace
and peace be
with you.

n.



Advent Greetings, Dear Friends!

I hope you are doing well.

As we embark on this Advent journey it is once again an opportunity for each of us to consciously slow down our personal world. So, pause. Stroll. Reflect. Linger. Hope. Wait. Wonder...to connect with our inner and outer God, the God of promise, healing, hope and justice all around us in this chaotic, complex, and fast-paced world.

I find this a very attractive invitation, as I hope you do too. I have the urge to step over the threshold, to be immersed in the Holy, with the expectation of renewal, of the coming Christ on this Advent journey.

I have once again included Jan Richardson's prayer, Blessing in the Chaos as it is a powerful reminder of the inner peace that is attainable for us.

My thanks as usual to ALL those who have contributed to this magazine and to the Care Packages. We could not do this without your dedication and support.

As we approach the Christmas season, please let us know of anyone who could benefit from some extra support and caring during this season. We love and think of each of you.

If you would like to be involved in delivering Christmas Cookies or helping out with the Care Packages over Christmas, please let me know.

...And don't forget, we always love reading your submissions to our magazine, so I encourage you to keep them coming, especially of memories, poetry, etc. around the Christmas season. Please send in your Christmas submissions the week of Nov 23rd.

Blessings of Peace, Love and Healing
on your Advent journey,

Vi



... continued

BLESSING IN THE CHAOS

To all that is chaotic
in you,
Let there come silence.
Let there be
a calming
of the clamoring,
a stilling
of the voices that
have laid their claim
on you,
that have made their
home in you,
That go with you
even to the
holy places
but will not
let you rest,
will not let you
hear your life
with wholeness
or feel the grace
that fashioned you.



Let what distracts you
cease.
Let what divides you
Cease.
Let there come an end
to what diminishes
and demeans,
and let depart
all that keeps you
in its cage.
Let there be
an opening
into the quiet
that lies beneath
the chaos,
where you find
the peace
you did not think
possible
and see what shimmers
within the storm.

by Jan Richardson, "The Cure for Sorrow: A Book of Blessing"

LIGAMENTS, ADVENT AND BABY JESUS- A SERMON BY REV. NICK

Let's begin with this ...

A while ago I went to see our massage therapist.
It had been a while since I had seen her
and in that while a whole pandemic happened
which was only kind of slightly stressful right?

And I could feel all that stress all throughout my body
so, I go in, and she's goes to work,
I begin to relax,
I can feel it all begin to release,
but then ...

she starts doing that thing you never want a health professional to do:
she starts making these worried sounds.

She massages my legs and goes, "Hmmm."
then she's on my arms and goes, "ooh ohh"
and then my neck she did it again, "ummm."

And she sounds concerned enough where I'm no longer relaxing but I'm
tensing back up,
so, I ask, "umm is everything cool?"

And she says, "Dude, I don't know how you move around, your ligaments are
crazy tight!"

And that's where she told me more about ligaments then I ever cared to
know.

Did you know that there are over 900 ligaments in your body?
Ligaments are those things that hold our bones together.

We get the word from the Latin word "ligare"

It means to bind.
To tie together.

Which makes sense as our ligaments literally bind our bones together.

Cool, right?

But I learned some more.

Get this:

re-ligare,
as you could probably guess,
means to re-bind.
To bind back together.

When our ligaments snap or tear, we need to be re-ligated,
to be binded back up so we can move again.

And get this ...

Re-ligare?

THAT'S where we get the word religion from.

Religion comes from the word re-binded.

It's literally that which binds us back together and help us move.

Take a sec to let that go to work.

Isn't that great?

I love that so much.

When we talk about religion,
yes, we're talking about belief systems,
and yes, we're talking about rituals and traditions
but when you boil it all down,
we're talking about the things that re-bind us and move

we're talking about the things that
that inspire and energize,
that soothe and massage,

that ground and empower,
that guide and heal,
the things that put us back together after we fall apart
that help us move after we seize up.

Are ya with me?

Yeah, that's what that word is talking about.

And I love that because not only does it help us see that we're all religious,
that we all do stuff religiously,
that regardless of what we believe, we are all religious in some way:
we all have the things we go to again and again when we fall apart, and life
becomes stagnant.
but I also love it because it re-frames what it is we're doing here.

We're here,
in church,
exploring the life and way of Jesus,
engaging in all the practices and wisdom and truths of it,
because it's here,
in that,
that we find something that massages those tight and tense parts of us,
there's something in it reconnects us with what it truly means to be human,
something in it helps us,
as one writer of the bible put it,
live, move, and have our being.

I mean, that's why you show up here right?

There's something liberating, animating, and healing about it all.
There's something in it that binds us back up and helps us move again.
There's something that, maybe regularly or maybe occasionally, helps ground
us and give us a sense of direction.

Anyone with me?

Who knows what I'm talking about?

Yeah, we could all name at least one thing.

For me,
especially over the past 4 year or so,
I think of this story of Christmas,
that story we get ready to enter into and celebrate every single Advent.

Now when we talk about the story of Christmas I'm going to go out on a limb
and say most people see it as just the story of Jesus' birth.
Its a good story, maybe even an inspiring story, but it's just an origin story,
it's just meant to show how important and special that baby is.
It's a story that has no meaning outside of Christmas.

But the more I talk about it,
the more I learn about it,
and the more I hear what it's saying,
that story of Christmas is actually SO MUCH MORE than that.

To see it as simply that actually does it a disservice
and maybe even misses the whole point of it all.

Cause the thing is it's not just a story of Angels appearing to shepherds,
of a young woman's courage,
of teenagers becoming parents and then refugees,
of subverting an evil Empire,
and of a baby being born,

it's about the thing all of those points to,
this universal truth all of that is telling us:

That God is here,
with us and for us,
making all things new.
And because it's that,
because it's a story about that truth:

it's a story for anyone who's held captive by something,
who believes they aren't good enough or loveable,

who longs for liberation and freedom,
who's living in fear and insecurity,
who's stuck in alone and despair,
who's feeling undone and stagnant,
it's a story that says to them:

you don't need to live like that.
it doesn't need to be that way.

that's not how all this needs to be because
a new life and world are possible.
God is here,
with us and for us,
making all things new.

Yeah ...

That's what Christmas is about.
That's what we're getting ready to celebrate.
It's a celebration of this liberating and radical truth:

God isn't up there, but God is here
repairing renewing and restoring,
and is inviting us to be a part of it.

Huge right?

And because it's about that, it's about hope.
Christmas is about hope.
As a friend of mine says, there's a reason the candle of hope burns the
longest.

Cause hope is what you get when you realize you don't need to live like that,
that it doesn't need to be that way,
that your life and world could be different.
Hope is that defiant and resilient trust that the worst thing isn't the last thing.

The impossible is possible.

It's too early to give up!
Tomorrow doesn't have to be like today!

Which is beautiful right?
But it's also kind of ridiculous too, isn't it?

Yeah, that's where we always end up when we talk about hope.
We end up in that tension of that's beautiful and that's ridiculous!

Cause hope can sometimes feel kind of naive, can't it?
With all the stuff we experience as humans, it's pretty easy to be skeptical,
even cynical about hope.

I mean, there's ...

Death.

Loss.

Systemic injustice.

Failure.

Virus Variants.

Fires and Floods.

Disappointment.

Hurt.

Betrayal.

We could go on and on and on,
and with all of that going on,
hope can feel pretty hard to have.

And OF course, we feel that way.

How can we NOT?

Those are the things that break our hearts and spirits and that root us in
despair.

Those are the things that make us fall apart and feel stuck.

Those are the things that make that Christmas feel like we're celebrating a
holiday instead of a truth about our universe.

Anyone with me?

Does anyone ever live in that tension?

Yeah, we all do.

If we're honest, this is where most of us are at.

And that tension is a good place to be because that's exactly why we have this thing we call Advent, this season we just entered into today.

Advent is when we name that tension.

It's when we look at what makes hope ridiculous, it's when we name all that's not right with the world, and ask a really important question:

How do we have hope?

With all that's going on, with it all in us and around us, how do not get defeated?

How do we not just become cynics but actually open to this truth of Christmas?

How do we practice hope?

Anyone ever ask that question?

Yeah, I'm sure we all have.

It's a very human question: how do we have hope?

Its a question we have to ask so we can experience just how big powerful liberating and everything changing Christmas is.

//

There's this story about an old rabbi who, by any account, had every bad thing that could happen to him happen to him:

he went through the Holocaust,

he lost his wife,

one of his kids wanted nothing to do with him,

his synagogue had been burned down twice by racists,

he was diagnosed with Parkinson's ...

And yet,
despite all of that,
to the wonder and awe of all his friends and congregants,
he never lost his joy.
He never seemed to be defeated by it all.
It never seemed to hold him down.
And so finally someone asked him,
Rabbi, how do you stay hopeful?
"Oh," he said, "that's easy: I remember."

One way we can practice hope is by remembering.

It's by going back to all those moments in our lives and world when it was all
going sideways ...
all those endings,
all those times of despair,
all those deaths,
all those moments of being overcome and overwhelmed,
all those periods of captivity,
all those times when it all came crashing down

and remembering how despite how it may have felt at the time,
despite how dark and done it felt,
despite the pain and loss that may have happened,
despite how we thought it was all over,

that it wasn't actually the end,
that darkness didn't last,
that we did heal,
there was life after death,
there was joy in the sorrow,
we found liberation,
we experienced how there was something bigger than those things that felt
so big, powerful, fixed, and final.

And we need to do that because it's there,
in remembering all of that,

that we begin to swing to the other side of that tension
because it's there we realize we can have HOPE.

It's there we realize oh, it DOESN'T need to be like this.
The WORST isn't the LAST.
And if it happened THEN, then maybe it can happen NOW!

And then something happens, doesn't it?
We find ourselves changing, don't we?

Everything begins to shift.
We see things we never saw before.
Light begins to appear.
We find ourselves becoming a bit more resilient,
a bit more energized,
a bit more daring,
a bit less overwhelmed and overcome,
and a bit more put back together and a bit less stuck.

We begin to trust in God is here, with us and for us, making all things new.

Yeah, that's hope.
That's what hope does.
It's one of those things that makes this religion a religion:
It binds us back together and helps us move.

And this is why hope is less a feeling and more an experience,
but more an energy,
more something we can get caught up in,
it's something that transforms and shapes us.

It doesn't just rebind us and help us move,
but puts us back together in a new way and helps us move differently.

It helps us become people who live like Christmas is true,
people who
despite it all

live like they know God is here, with us and for us,
making all things new,
and so, they shine like stars in the dark,
they refuse to be defeated,
they resist and push back against despair,
they choose to be people of hope,
people who kick at the darkness till it bleeds day light
because they know, they remember, that Christmas happens.



this is why we light that candle first.
it changes everything
it reminds us of why we celebrate Christmas every single year.

and so ...

if you are feeling a bit undone right now
if you're feeling stuck,
if you need some ligaments, put back together,

remember,
have hope.
and live like it.

amen.

Advent Prayer

Holy One,
awaken my heart,
quiet my mind,
open the door of my being
to perceive your presence.
Settle what stirs endlessly within me.
Quiet the voice of haste and hurry.
Awaken my inner senses to recognize
your love hiding beneath the frenzy.
Enfold me in your attentiveness.
Wrap a mantle of mindfulness
around every part of my days.
I want to welcome you with joy
and focus on your dwelling place.

Abundant peace,

Joyce Rupp



THE THING IN OUR BASEMENT AND WHY JOY MATTERS - A SERMON BY REV. NICK

So, this morning let's talk about ... the thing in our basement, the problem with what we're exploring this week, whether or not I'm using the word oxymoron correctly, and the thing we should never ever ever do.

So, I don't know if I've mentioned it before, but about a year ago, just before my sabbatical started, Dawn and I put this in our basement:

It's one of those Peloton bikes.

It's that bike company that put out that controversial commercial this month. It's basically a stationary bike where you can live stream classes or choose from a huge database of archived cases.

You choose the kind of work out, you choose your fav instructor, and boom, you're biking alongside 1000's of other people around the world.

They're great.

We love it.

It essentially lets me eat whatever I want to eat.

Anyway ...

I was doing this class the other day,

it's a 90's rock ride,

and I'm loving it,

the music takes me back,

but the class is HARD.

Like ridiculous hard.

The instructor is really kicking our butts,

making us go faster, making us add on some resistance.

Its just brutal.

So, we're about 3/4 of the way through and I'm pretty sure I'm about to die.

Like not really, but kind of really.

Does anyone know that feeling?

Yah. I mean, I can feel my body,
I can feel my breathe,
I can feel my sweat,
I can feel my heartbeat.
I'm feeling all of that at once.

And it's just all a bit too much and I'm pretty sure I'm about to throw in the towel and crawl into a corner somewhere, when the instructor looks at me through the screen, and says,

"Does it feel like your whole being is on fire?!"

and I'm all "Yes!"

and I hope she's going to say, "Ok, well, that means its time to stop!

That's enough!"

but she says:

"THAT'S what it feels like to be alive. Let's keep it going!"

So, we're 3 weeks into Advent.

We're three weeks into this season of getting ready to embrace all that Xmas is, of showing up at the manger not just ready to celebrate,

but more importantly,

ready to join in on what it means:

that God is here, with us and for us, leading us into new lives and a new world - not a life and world we get to go to after we die,

but a new life and new world, right here, right now ...

a life and world connected with God, each other, and ourselves.

So, as we journey through Advent, we're reflecting on what that means for us.

We're reflecting on what we have to do to show up in the right way.

and the thing we're invited to reflect upon today is joy.

And here's where the trouble started with this sermon because I think out of the other three things - hope, peace, and love -

joy might be the hardest to do because well, what are we talking about when we talk about joy?

Cause it's made out to be this pinnacle of emotions.

We hear about it in these songs we sing in church,

we hear about it in pop culture,
whenever we see it written down it's always fancy looking ...
it feels important,
it has that air about it,
but what is it exactly?

Is it pure happiness extract?
Is it elation?
Is it some spiritual high - something exclusively tied to the Divine?
Is it something else all together?

What is joy?
And then,
to add another question into the mix,
what does it have to do with Christmas?

So those were the two questions I was ruminating with all week,
and wanting to offer you more than a platitude and wanting to explore joy in
a way that actually felt emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually honest,
I kept thinking about that bike in our basement,
which really is just another way of saying the same thing this old parable tries
to say:

There was once a young woman who, every night, would go into these really
scary and dangerous woods and run through them while laughing.
She did it so often and so deliberately that people would gather to watch her,
confused and amazed because everyone knew just how scary and dangerous
those woods were.

One night they were all wondering just what the point of it all was when a
wise old woman from the other town spoke up and said,
"You guys don't do this?! You should. She's practicing being alive."

When we talk about joy ...

We're not talking about an emotion per se, we're talking about an experience.
We're not talking so much about something we do,
as something that happens to us.

When we talk about joy, we're talking about the radical affirmation that you are fully and truly alive, just as you are.

Joy is crying at a funeral and then - almost in the very same breath - laughing.

Joy is just having lost your job but dancing with your kids in the living room.

Joy is realizing that despite what people say, you are beautiful.

Joy is being so utterly lost but feeling so utterly free.

Joy is feeling your entire being.

Joy is running through a dark and scary woods and realizing you're ok and that just being so glorious, so inspiring, you can't help but laugh.

When we talk about joy what we're talking about is knowing it is GOOD to be alive.

We're talking about that feeling that despite what is happening, you are still HERE.

We're talking about feeling the entire depths of our humanity, and still, despite it all, feeling more ALIVE than ever.

That's what we're talking about when we talk about joy ... that radical and fleeting affirmation that life is GOOD.

Are ya with me?

And I think that's part of why, out of all the passages we could hear, we were given the one we heard earlier.

Part of the fun with these passages that we get in the lectionary, that schedule of Bible readings we do throughout the year, is to try to figure out why they gave us that passages for this service. What does that have to do with this Sunday of joy?

And what we heard in this passage is yet another vision for what it feels like when God comes into people's lives and worlds.

It's describing what happens in us and around us when we allow the Divine to move in.

And the thing I kept coming back to in this thing is how the whole passage is kind of a paradox.

The whole thing is one big juxtaposition.
It's one big oxymoron.

The badlands will flower
limp hands become full of energy
rubbery knees strengthen
blind eyes see
hot sands cool
deaf ears hear

The whole thing is this description of things that don't usually go together:

barren - fruitful
hot - cold
weak - strong.

Which is weird.

It feels counter intuitive.

A life with God is both of those things?

It's not just one end of the spectrum but the entire spectrum?!

But maybe that's the point.

maybe that's the takeaway here as we think about joy.

Maybe this is trying to get us to see - and therefore experience -
joy in a new way.

Joy isn't just the far end of the spectrum.

It isn't pure happiness.

Joy isn't what we feel when there's nothing bad or wrong in our lives.

Joy is feeling happiness and elation EVEN WHEN we're feeling down,
out, hurt, wounded, and sad.

Joy is the feeling we get when we experience the full scope of the spectrum,
and we still know that it is good to be alive.

Joy is that inspiring, affirming, and fulfilling feeling that despite what's
happening, it is good to be here.

Are ya with me?
We're still on this walk together?

So, if that's joy ...
the two questions we're left with are ...

Why the big deal?
Why have a Sunday riffing off of it instead of something else?
and
what does that have to do with Christmas?

So first ... Why a big deal?

Joy's a big deal because of where joy leads us.

Cause if that's what joy is ...
think back to those moments of joy you've had,
think back to those times when despite what else is happening,
you've felt good to be alive,

Where does it take you?

It takes us into one of those foundational, over-arching,
and centring truths our tradition gives us:

It is good to be human.
It is good to be alive.
It is good to be here.

And if that's where joy takes us, if joy takes us into that truth,
where does joy ultimately lead us?

Joy takes us into deeper into life,
not a life free from pain,
not a life free from the depths,
but into a life of wholeness,
into a life of recognizing it all belongs,
a life where we can feel the good even in the bad.

And what does that have to do with xmas?

Well, I think it all comes down to this:

If Xmas is about anything,
it's the liberating and revolutionary truth that the
darkness and death don't have to win,
they don't have to have the final word,
but what can win,
who can have the final say,
is light and life.

Christmas is the beautiful truth that life is good,
that it is good to be alive,
that underneath everything else, our world is still good.

What joy does is tap into that goodness Christmas reminds us of.
Joy is what happens when we see all the stuff that could get us down,
that could defeat us, that could draw us into despair,
and choose to see the good,
choose to see the light, and revel in the goodness of it all.

That's why we're called to practice joy.

Because joy's subversive.

Joy's disruptive.

Joy's liberating.

So, as we head into another week of Advent,
we're invited to practice joy ...

don't kill it.

don't forbade joy.

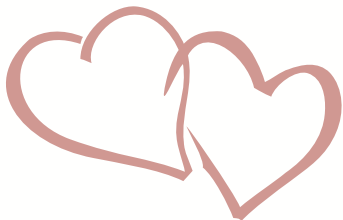
let it in.

lean into it.

let it go to work.

its fleeting enough as it is.

Amen.



YOU KEEP US.....

You keep us waiting.
You, the God of all time,
Want us to wait for the right time in which to discover
Who we are, where we must go,
Who will be with us, and what we must do.
So, thank you ... for the waiting time.

You keep us looking.
You, the God of all space,
Want us to look in the right and wrong places for signs of hope,
For people who are hopeless,
For visions of a better world that will appear among the disappointments
of the world we know.
So, thank you ... for the looking time.

You keep us loving.
You, the God whose name is love,
Want us to be like you –
To love the loveless and the unlovely and the unlovable;
To love without jealousy or design or threat,
And most difficult of all, to love ourselves.
So, thank you ... for the loving time.


And in all this you keep us,
Through hard questions with no easy answers;
Through failing where we hoped to succeed and making an impact
when we felt useless;
Through the patience and the dreams and the love of others;
And through Jesus Christ and his Spirit, you keep us.

So thank you ... for the keeping time,
and for now,
and for ever, Amen

Gratitude For The Little Moments

Exhaust the little moment. Soon it dies.
And be it gash or gold, it will not come
Again in this identical disguise."

~Gwendolyn Brooks



gratitude, yes,
for all the big things
that stand tall,
thick with abundance,
joy, fruitfulness.
I cannot help
but applaud
their presence.

but deep thankfulness
for the bite-sized
pieces of my life?
I had not thought of them,
those little snippets of time
so easily consumed
in the hurry and blur
of pretentious days.

the little moments,
assumed and presumed,
slip quickly through
the fingers of my busy life.

November gestures
with a wrinkled brown hand,
beckons me wisely
to consider
those fleeing moments of grace
in things quickly passing:
a walk on a musky-wooded path,
a cup of coffee silently savored,
a birdsong in the squeaky hours of dawn,
the gentle touch of a liver-spotted hand,
a loving letter from a grateful stranger,
a fading crescent moon in a royal blue sky.

I turn to gather
finely layered remnants like these
in the come and go of my days,
and discover, with surprise,
how quickly my inner room
is a harvest place of gold.

-By Joyce Rupp



HEARING GOD IN A FEMALE VOICE - A SERMON BY JOE KAY

A female voice begins the Jesus story. In Luke's version, a woman decides all by herself — a subversive thing! — whether the Jesus story will even happen. Mary's "let it be" gets everything started.

A courageous, hesitant, female voice brings God more fully into the world.

Advent is a good time to honour, cherish and listen to the many strong female voices that challenge us, teach us, love us, and bring us into a deeper experience of God, if we let them.

Then and now, those female voices are widely ignored, marginalized, and muted by those who think that only males should be heard. The Jesus story turns all that upside-down. It places women front and center, right from the start.

Mary's role is shocking in a time and a place when only men made the big decisions and women were treated more like property than persons. That's only the beginning of this theologically radical and socially subversive story.

Luke's version has Mary visiting her relative Elizabeth, uniting two strong women in a divine moment. Mary preaches about God's passion for justice in ways that her son would later repeat, which is no surprise.

After all, who teaches Jesus and moulds him?
His mom. Jesus first learns about God through a female voice.

Perhaps that's why Jesus is so persistent about ignoring and violating the rules in his society and his religion that try to limit the role of women. He constantly interacts with women in ways the religious and social leaders find scandalous.

There's the famous story of Jesus visiting two sisters and one of them chooses to sit with him and discuss religion — a man's realm — instead of joining her sister Martha in preparing the meal, as a woman was required to do back then.

We all know that the Jesus story culminates with women showing courage and love while the men run and hide.

Peter denies knowing Jesus to save his hide.

The women?

They risk their lives to be with Jesus up to his last breath.

And as the story goes,

two days later it's the women who have the courage to go to the tomb.

While the men are still hiding in fear, the women experience the still-alive Jesus.

He tells them to teach the men what they've experienced.

The men will learn from the women.

Predictably, the men don't believe the women and dismiss their accounts.

They run to the tomb to see for themselves.

And yet, they don't experience the still-alive Jesus that the women already know.

The same thing happens in every generation:

Men choose to ignore the voices of women who have experienced things they know nothing about.

The men who took control of the church marginalized women, something Jesus would find appalling.

They dishonestly portrayed Mary of Magdala as a prostitute.

Jesus' mother was limited to the role of the "Virgin Mary" instead of the courageous, let-it-be Mary who changed everything all by herself.

Today, many faith communities bar women from going to the pulpit and telling about their experiences of the still-alive Jesus.

Women's voices are marginalized and ignored, just like 2,000 years ago.

Our society considers a female voice less believable and less important than a male voice.

When it comes to sexual abuse, for instance, a man's shifting denial is believed over the word of so many courageous and prophetic women saying #MeToo.

It's long past a time for change.

Let's use this Advent —
the season that starts with one woman's courageous voice —
to pay closer attention to all the female voices in our world.
Let's honour them and hear God still speaking to all of us through them.

May we let those voices teach us their truths,
especially the truths that we're reluctant to hear.
May we allow their courageous and persistent "let it be"
change each of us and our world all over again.



It's OK to Not Be OK

It's ok to not be ok.

It's ok to be scared.

It's ok to question
absolutely everything.

It's ok to wish it
was different.

It's ok to wish it
didn't happen.

But please don't wish
you are better at it
because you are doing
the best you can and you
know they would say
that is more than
enough.



-Four little words

FEATURING OUR GREATEST STRENGTH — OUR RDLUC PEOPLE

This series of monthly articles will profile—with their permission, of course—one of the individuals, couples, or families that make our church the unique and special place it is. Who is ‘important’ enough to be featured here? Everyone! This month, we get to know **Carol Watson**.

Carol has attended our church for eleven or twelve years now. “I started coming because I was living in Sanderson Ridge,” she says, “and I became acquainted with my fellow condominium residents, Bob and Katie Mutlow. At the time, Bob was interim minister at RDLUC and his friendly manner encouraged me to come. I didn’t need much encouragement. I was a grieving widow, lonely and looking for a place that would help me start a new chapter in my life.”



Les, Carol’s beloved husband, had passed away from cancer at 62, not long before she met the Mutlow’s. At RDLUC, she got involved right away: selling Christmas Dinner and ‘On the Edge’ Concert series tickets, helping cook the dinners, assisting with parking at Spruce Meadows, and often working in the kitchen alongside an amazing lady named Doris (Marj Den Hoed’s mother, then in her nineties!).

“The church was a huge help to me in my grief,” she recalls. “I became a regular at Bible Study on Wednesday mornings, learned of the grief’s others were enduring, and didn’t feel nearly so alone. When Bob Mutlow’s interim position ended and RDLUC hired Rev. Nick as our permanent minister, Bible Study became ‘Faith and Coffee’ and new perspectives added a different dimension to the discussions. I continued to enjoy it greatly.”

FEATURING OUR GREATEST STRENGTH — OUR RDLUC PEOPLE

. . . continued

On a humorous note, Carol was involved in a minor car accident en route to Faith and Coffee one morning. After her initial relief at being unharmed, she couldn't help grinning while police at the scene interrogated the other driver (who seemed high or intoxicated) before moving on to question her. "I told them I was on my way to Bible Study at my church," she laughs. "No doubt that made it pretty obvious to them which one of us was more likely at fault!"

A few years ago, Carol moved from Sanderson Ridge to a house in Lake Bonavista, the community where she and Les had raised their children. Diagnosed with a tumour on her pituitary gland, she'd been temporarily banned from driving, and she enjoyed being able to walk to the neighbourhood Safeway for groceries. An avid gardener, she finds the house also affords her the opportunity to indulge that hobby until the day she decides she's ready to embrace the condominium lifestyle once again.

Has COVID dampened Carol's spirits? Yes, she admits, it has made somewhat of a shut-in of her. Recently she lost her sister in B.C. to kidney disease and had to curtail final days visiting due to restrictions and concerns. And yes, she really misses our RDLUC 'in person' services but isn't quite comfortable returning yet. Soon, perhaps.

"Meanwhile, looking at the funny side of things helps me manage," she smiles. "The counsellor at a grief group I attended after I lost Les asked us to think of ONE benefit to living life without our spouses. A bit appalled, I finally said, 'For the first time in ages, I'm back in control of the TV remote!' Everybody laughed. I got the point: seeing the funny side is always immensely therapeutic."

And so, it is. Thank you, dear Carol, for reminding us of that extremely important life lesson!

Our thanks to Fran Porter for writing this submission

Creative Blessings

Here are some enjoyable ways to build your joy and gratitude this Advent season.

Hot Cocoa Prayer

1. Measure two tablespoons of cocoa powder. Taste it (it's bitter). Pray for some of the things that are bitter in your life and a little hard to take on their own.
2. Measure and add 1–2 tablespoons of sugar or sweetener. Taste it (it's sweet). Offer a prayer of thanks for all the things that are sweet in your life and are perhaps best in small doses.
3. Add a pinch of salt. Taste it (it's salty). Offer a prayer for moments of grace and clarity, experiences that bring out the flavour of life.
4. Warm some milk (or milk beverage) while reflecting on when you have experienced the Holy in the past day or week. What has warmed your heart?
5. Mix warmed milk beverage with hot chocolate mixture. Taste it (it's yummy). Give thanks to God and enjoy.

Rule of Life

How do you hope to improve or enhance your spiritual health this year? What steps can you take to deepen your relationship with Jesus? How do you grow closer to people in your life whom you love? One way to strengthen your spiritual health is to develop a rule of life, which is sort of like a guideline or goal for your daily behaviour. Many have attributed a rule of life from the writings and teachings of Martin Luther King Jr. (particularly from his instructions to demonstrators). This rule includes things like: meditate daily on the teaching and life of Jesus, walk and talk in the manner of love, and seek to perform regular service for others and the world. What would be included in your Rule of Life?

Create your own rule and place it somewhere prominent so that you are reminded of it every day.

Joy Jar

Create a list or Joy Jar of 105 things that bring you joy. Write or share 15 things that bring you joy (you could do 5 per meal) each day on separate sheets of paper and add it to your Joy Jar. Keep your Joy Jars somewhere prominent (like on your kitchen table or under your Christmas tree) and make sure to give thanks for all of the little things that bring you and your loved ones joy each day. On days when you are having a hard time giving thanks, dip into your Joy Jar.

Blessings Cube

Before every meal roll a die to pick your blessing. Paste a different prayer or blessing on each side of a cube or large die (or number 6 blessings and read the blessing of the number rolled). Here are 6 blessings to start with; be creative and create your own family favourites.

- 1.** We love our bread, we love our butter; but most of all we love each other. (Madeline by Ludwig Bemelmans)
- 2.** For each new morning with its light; For rest and shelter of the night; For health and food; For love and friends; For everything Thy goodness sends. Amen. (Ralph Waldo Emerson)
- 3.** (Sing to the tune of "Frère Jacques") We are thankful, we are thankful. We are glad, we are glad, for the many blessings, for the many blessings, that we have, that we have. Amen. (Unknown)
- 4.** God is great, God is good. Let us thank God for our food.
- 5.** For food that stays our hunger; for rest that brings us ease; for homes where memories linger; we give our thanks for these.
- 6.** Be present at our table, Lord. Be here and everywhere adored. Thy people bless, and grant that we may feast in paradise with thee. (John Wesley)

RDLUC PASSAGES



David Paul Jensen

October 27, 1935 - October 1, 2022

It is with heavy hearts that we announce the passing of our friend, David, on Saturday, October 1, 2022, at the age of 86 years.

Many of us knew David from our Faith & Coffee sessions or from friendship with his companion and dearest friend, Lillian Stewart.

We'll remember his wisdom, strong presence, kindness, faithfulness, sense of humour, and his curiosity.

We invite everyone to offer a prayer for Lillian and the rest of David's family as they grieve and mourn this loss.

May we remember that he is now back with God and brought back into life, love, and light itself.

David - you will be greatly missed. May you rest in peace.

by Rev, Nick

David's complete obituary to follow and is posted on McInnis & Holloway's website.

continued ...

David Paul Jensen

October 27, 1935 - October 1, 2022

It is with sadness we announce the passing of David Paul Jensen, on October 1, 2022, in Calgary, AB, at the age of 86 years.

Born October 27, 1935, in Calgary, AB, Dad was raised on the Jensen family farm near Blackie, AB, and went to school in Nanton and High River, AB. He also attended Olds College in Agriculture. He returned to Calgary where he met and married mom in 1958, and they raised their family. After mom's passing, he re-joined and found comfort in the Church where he attended Central United, Red Deer Lake United, and McDougall United.

Dad was also a Journeyman Machinist/Millwright and worked at SAIT until his retirement in 1995. He was also a 70-year member of the I.O.O.F (The Oddfellows) and was a member of SAIT's Alive after retirement.

Dad's greatest passions included working with his hands. Over the years, he built many different things and in the early 2000's, started carving, and was a member of the carving club at the Kirby Centre, until those gatherings could no longer be held due to COVID. He also enjoyed the outdoors, working in his garden, animals, and the peace and solitude that came with being in nature.

He is survived by his children Liz Pyper, Mary-Ann (David) Gaudreau, James Jensen, Deborah (Wayne) Meili, Caroline (Stephen) Jensen, and numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He is also survived by his partner and companion Lillian Stewart, who he met after mom's passing and who provided Dad companionship, comfort, and care these past few years, and while Dad's time was nearing an end.

David was predeceased by his wife of 54 years, J Elizabeth (Betty) Jensen in 2013, and his son Robert Jensen in 2016.

David Paul Jensen

October 27, 1935 - October 1, 2022

We would also like to thank the staff and volunteers of AgeCare Glenmore for their care of Dad. As well, we would like to give a special thanks to the recreation staff, dad enjoyed and attended as many activities as he could. He was considered a Super Active Senior there.

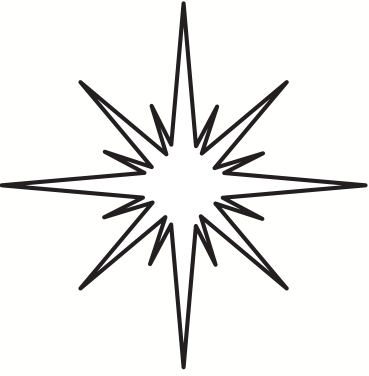
Funeral Services will be held at McDougall United Church, (8516 Athabasca St. SE, Calgary, AB) on Saturday, October 8, 2022, at 11:00 a.m. Reception to follow at the Church. Internment will be at Union Cemetery following the reception.

If friends so desire, memorial tributes may be made directly to Diabetes Canada, 220, 6223 – 2nd Street S.E., Calgary, AB T2H 1J5 Telephone: (403) 266-0620, ext. 1112, www.diabetes.ca, or to the charity of the donor's choice.

In living memory of David Jensen, a tree will be planted in the Ann & Sandy Cross Conservation Area by McInnis & Holloway Funeral Homes, Fish Creek, 14441 Bannister Road SE, Calgary, AB T2X 3J3, Telephone: 403-256-9575.



Animate the Nativity



Nativity sets (or crèches) are cherished symbols of Advent. Often a nativity scene is put up at the beginning of advent and left to enjoy for the rest of the season. This year, imagine the nativity as a living, changing story. The pieces can be moved and played with as the characters make their journeys towards Bethlehem.

- What does the scene look like when there are just animals living in the barn?
- Where are the shepherds tending their sheep?
- What do the journeys of the magi, the shepherds, and Mary and Joseph look like?
- Who arrives first to the barn? Who takes longer to arrive?

Beginning on Day 1 of Advent (November 27), join Balthazar, Melchior, and Caspar, along with their faithful camel, Hezekiah, on a whimsical holiday quest to find the infant king.





YOUR SMILE FOR THE DAY

Lexophile:

describes those that have a love for words, such as- "you can tune a piano, but you can't tuna fish", or "To write with a broken pencil is pointless." An annual competition is held by the New York Times to see who can create the best original lexophile.

No matter how much you push the envelope, it'll always be stationary.

If you don't pay your exorcist, you can get repossessed.

I'm reading a book about anti-gravity. I just can't put it down.

I didn't like my beard at first. Then it grew on me.

Did you hear about the crossed-eyed teacher who lost her job because she couldn't control her pupils?

When you get a bladder infection, urine trouble.

When chemists die, they barium.

I stayed up all night to see where the sun went, and then it dawned on me.

I changed my iPod's name to Titanic. It's syncing now.

England has no kidney bank, but it does have a Liverpool .

Haunted French pancakes give me the crepes.

This girl today said she recognized me from the Vegetarians Club, but I'd swear I've never met herbivore.

YOUR SMILE FOR THE DAY

I know a guy who's addicted to drinking brake fluid, but he says he can stop any time.

A thief who stole a calendar got twelve months.

When the smog lifts in Los Angeles U.C.L.A.
I got some batteries that were given out free of charge.

A dentist and a manicurist married. They fought tooth and nail.

A will is a dead giveaway.

With her marriage, she got a new name and a dress.

Police were summoned to a daycare center where a three-year-old was resisting a rest.

Did you hear about the fellow whose entire left side was cut off? He's all right now.

A bicycle can't stand alone; it's just two tired.

The guy who fell onto an upholstery machine last week is now fully recovered.

He had a photographic memory, but it was never fully developed.

When she saw her first strands of gray hair, she thought she'd dye.

Acupuncture is a jab well done. That's the point of it.

Those who get too big for their pants will be totally exposed in the end.

WE ARE RED DEER LAKE UNITED CHURCH



We are an inclusive and affirming community of faith – people of all ages, perspectives, and stories, who gather to connect with God, each other, and ourselves, and find in Jesus a new way of being human and alive in the world.

**you're welcome, wanted,
and accepted. join us on
the journey.**

Red Deer Lake United Church

96187 Spruce Meadows Green SW
Foothills, AB T1S 2R9

e: office@reddeerlakeuc.com

p: 403-256-3181

w: reddeerlakeuc.com

 red deer lake united church

 reddeerlakeuc

our staff & ministry team:

minister

Rev. Nick Coates

nick@reddeerlakeuc.com

congregational care counsellor

Vi Sharpe

ccare@reddeerlakeuc.com

children's ministry coordinator

kids@reddeerlakeuc.com

administrative manager

Angie Johnston

office@reddeerlakeuc.com

communications administrator

Charlee Mac

info@reddeerlakeuc.com

custodian

Bill Holman

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS:

Monday - Thursday

9am - 3pm

Do you have a story to share? A memory? A poem? A photograph? We would love to publish it in the next issue of this magazine.

Please call us at **(403) 256-3181** or send your submission to **info@reddeerlakeuc.com**

**The next submission deadline is
Nov 30, 2022.**