



ADVENT 2023

CHURCH @ HOME

staying connected with God,
each other, and ourselves

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Possibility

We live most of our lives in the realm of the possible. We know what we can do, and we do it. We can bake Christmas cake. We can ride a bicycle. We can do brain surgery. Each one of us, of course, has different things that we place within the realm of the feasible, but all of us spend most of our days within those boundaries, doing the familiar and living safely.

Unfortunately, staying within the limits of the possible means there is no growth; there is no change; there is no transformation.

We remain where we are, doing what we can do in the way we have always done it, while, ironically, at the same time, so often complaining about how small and restricting our world has become.

Advent is a season of the Christian year when we are waiting for something to happen—something new, something different, something beyond the ordinary. Jesus is coming. And perhaps that makes this one of the most important times of the year, in the sense that we are preparing to open ourselves to something unexpected—a new possibility, a deeper insight, a refreshing reminder that the message of good news is that the Spirit of God does come into the world with renewal for all of us.

As we get older, we might feel that our world is shrinking, and that this message of new possibilities is aimed at younger people. And it is true that we may not be as fast as we used to be or as adaptable as we once were. Some hobbies we have had to leave behind, and some skills we once treasured, we are no longer able to enjoy.

But the secret is that no matter how old or young we are, we can find new possibilities—new things we can do and delight in, new wisdom that enriches our lives. Instead of hockey, we might now play chess. And perhaps it is time to replace cooking the Christmas dinner for the entire family with setting the table and sharing our memories and our recipes with those who are now carrying out the traditions we started.

... continued

The basic problem is that often when we talk about doing the possible, we just mean doing what we have done before, because we know we can do it. God says, "Oh no, my friends, there are so many things you have not tried, so much that still lies unexplored." So, during the Advent season this year, let's all wait for the Spirit of Christ to come into the world, Let's wait for new ideas to call to us and new experiences to embrace us. As children, we waited for pageant Sunday to arrive and for Santa to come. And as we become older, sometimes we don't know for what exactly we are waiting. But let us wait just the same. There are new friendships to be found, new games to be played, new experiences to be had. Yes, this is possible, for Jesus always points to the God for whom all things are possible, and we are a part of that journey of discovery.

Grant



Advent Greetings, Dear Friends!

May this special season find you well. Embarking on the Advent journey is a time of anticipation and excitement. Those are characteristic feelings that accompany the wait for any new baby's birth, and most especially the birth of the holy child who had such a profound influence on the world.

Advent is the period of waiting. And, while we wait, let us be consciously introspective as we pause to make room within ourselves for peace, hope, joy and love. Those values are all too often overlooked in this fast-paced, chaotic daily life we live. It is so easy to become caught up in the 'rat race' and to forget to take care of our spiritual selves—that care so vital to our emotional well-being.

To pause in the midst of haste and hassle and just reflect on the wonders of the season is a very attractive prospect. I hope you will join me in accepting the invitation to do just that. On the next page, I have included an Advent Reflection by Steven Charleston, a retired American Episcopal Bishop. He says so many things that are a powerful reminder of the inner peace that is available to us if we practice such reflection, not just at Advent but on a regular basis.

My thanks, as always, to EVERYONE who has contributed to this magazine and to the Care Packages. Without your dedication and support, this program would not exist. As the Christmas season draws near, please let us know of anyone who could benefit from extra support and caring during this time.

And please remember how much we appreciate and value your submissions. Results of a recent poll we conducted of our readers tell us you love the magazine but wouldn't mind it being somewhat shorter, more like a newsletter. In response to that feedback, we plan to scale down the magazine somewhat in coming months. Don't let that discourage you from contributing! We love you all and are always delighted to hear from you.



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

Advent Reflection: A Lantern of Love

Sometimes in this troubled world of ours, we forget love is all around us. We imagine the worst of other people and withdraw into our own shells. But try this simple test: Stand still in any crowded place and watch the people around you. Within a very short time, you will begin to see love, and you will see it over and over and over. A young mother talking to her child, a couple laughing together as they walk by, an older man holding the door for a stranger—small signs of love are everywhere. The more you look, the more you will see. Love is literally everywhere. We are surrounded by love. The instinct to care is still within us—all of us—so much so that you can see it clearly just by standing still.

Reflection

Pause to be in touch with the divine light dwelling within your being. Imagine yourself as a candle in the darkness, a shining presence of love. Call to mind persons whose life holds the bleak grayness of suffering. Consider, too, people and places globally where darkness prevails. Remember, too, our dear planet Earth and the harm being done there. Mindfully gather Emmanuel's light. Send this forth to all whom you have remembered. At the close of this reflection, deliberately make a decision to be a lantern of love this Advent.

Steven Charleston
(retired American Episcopal Bishop)



Prepare.

by Cindy Thomas

A feeding trough in a hillside cave,
a little straw, a swaddling cloth —
A baby took his first breath
unnoticed by a town that had
no room.

Nobody knew that time had been invaded,
split in two, as human and divine
were forever fused
in flesh and bone, tissue and blood,
the fragile body of a newborn child.
Nobody knew that within his tiny chest
beat the very heart of God.

It doesn't take much to receive him.
No fanfare, no gilded cradle. He doesn't ask
to be swaddled in silk or
adorned with gold.
He only asks for a longing heart,
an earnest cry, a yearning soul
where he can grow,
human and divine forever fused
in you.

RDLUC Property Committee Update

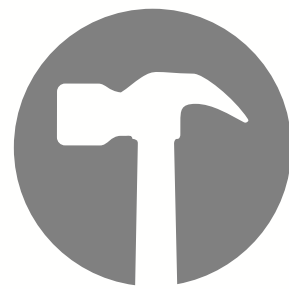
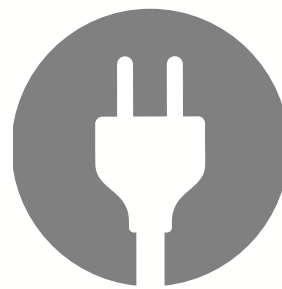
I, Dave Churchill, was asked to write for the magazine a brief description of what the Property Committee has done over the last few years. To keep you fully informed, here it is.

Repairs and Maintenance

- **Painting:** The Multi Purpose Room, the lower link hallway, the Youth Room, the Lower Hall, the upper Link hallway, and the Minister's office have all been recently painted. Some of these areas needed drywall crack repair where the Annex is attached to the Link due to uneven settlements of the building foundations.
- **Siding:** New Hardie board siding was installed on the Annex wall adjacent to the Memorial Garden. As funding comes available, we plan to continue replacing the old cedar siding, from which paint is peeling.
- **Construction:** I designed and constructed a removable wheelchair ramp to allow handicapped people access to the stage. It can be removed to improve seating capacity for concerts.
- **Security:** Security cameras were installed to record activity outside the church. The security team members can view the live video through a cell phone app. Recorder video can be copied to provide to the RCMP. When I took over in the security department, my first priority was to eliminate false alarms. Five faulty motion sensors were replaced, and one backup battery needed to be reconnected so that a false alarm is no longer triggered when power goes down. I have also set up the system to message me on my cell phone when the alarm is armed and disarmed. Security team members have cell phone access to the alarm system, so we can see what the status of the system is as well as arm and disarm it remotely. This has saved trips to the church late at night!

- Water: The church's potable water is ground water from a well. We have a water extraction licence from Alberta Environment that allows us to use a limited amount of water each year. So, on a regular basis, we are required to measure and record the volume of water that we use and to measure the depth of the water in the well from the ground surface. Because the water is for public consumption, we are required to treat the water with chlorine and to test it on a regular basis. Water samples are sent to Alberta Health Services and tested for Coliforms and E coli. I look after the chlorination as per government regulations.
- Sewage: The church has its own sewage system. There are two septic tanks that separate the solids from the liquids and a third tank that is a dosing tank for the septic field which only deals with the liquids where they soak into the ground. Every six months to a year the tanks are pumped out and hauled away, removing the solids, and also giving the field a rest.
- Conservation: It is critical not to waste water. When sink taps and toilets are left running, two problems result. It uses up our water licence unnecessarily and it overwhelms the septic field. Church staff and I are continuously checking to make sure no fixtures are leaking. Leaking from the toilets happens when mineral deposits from our well water build up on the toilet float valve mechanisms and around the tank flush valves. I have set up a system to remove the valves, then soak them in a mild acid solution to remove the deposits so that they will function properly again. If you see or hear a toilet running on and on, please call me and leave a message!
- Yard Work: The Property committee looks after the yard work around the church as well as the beautiful Memorial Garden of which we can all be proud. Volunteers mow grass, weed flower beds, and trim hedges and trees. In winter, volunteers remove snow and ice from sidewalks. We also maintain the parking lot by filling in potholes, hiring contractors to add gravel and grading to allow drainage away from the building, and doing winter snow clearance.

- Energy saving: Lights constantly need replacing. As they fail, I replace them with the more efficient LED lights, giving priority to those used most, such as the exterior lights that are on all night, and the lights most often left on inside the church.
- Pest control: Because we are a rural church, mice inevitably get into the building. We now have a trapline! When I first set it up, we caught LOTS of mice, but it seems to be under control now. I usually catch one every week or two.
- Fire and Safety: We have the fire and safety equipment checked on an annual basis, including the fire alarm system, smoke and heat sensors, emergency lights and the fire suppression system in the lower kitchen (it gets inspected twice each year).
- Heating and Ventilation: The heating systems in the building are also inspected and maintained on an annual basis. The Annex has three forced air furnaces, like residential furnaces, two to heat the main floor and one to heat the basement. The basement one is a down draft furnace with the ducting under the slab. The link and sanctuary are heated by one of two air handling units with the basement heated by a separate air handling unit. The air is heated by blowing through coils with hot glycol that is heated through a heat exchanger with hot water from one of the two boilers.
- Elevator: The elevator is a critical item, so it is inspected and maintained (if required) every three months.
- General maintenance: it seems as though there is always something to fix, repair or replace!



- Most recent Project: 'Nature's Kindergarten'. Our renters in the east side of the lower hall, requested their rental area be more secure. As approved by the Trustees and the Church Board, the project involved constructing a short permanent wall with double doors that can be locked. The remainder of the wall is a partition wall that can easily be removed if required. The partition wall was cut to look like evergreen trees and painted by our resident artist, Larry Stilwell. Larry also painted images of birds common to our area, much to the delight of the kindergarten students. If you get a chance, go downstairs, and check it out!
- Ongoing Projects: Our next big project will be replacing the siding on the north end of the chapel (that's the side that faces the Highway). We will also be updating the insulation value of the wall by repairing or replacing the tarpaper to seal the building envelope as well as adding insulation directly under the new Hardie Board siding. The project will improve the exterior look of the Chapel (without compromising its historic aspect) and help reduce heat loss during colder months.
- The Property Committee is committed to maintain the condition and esthetics of our church for the enjoyment and safety of us all!

Submitted by,
Dave Churchill



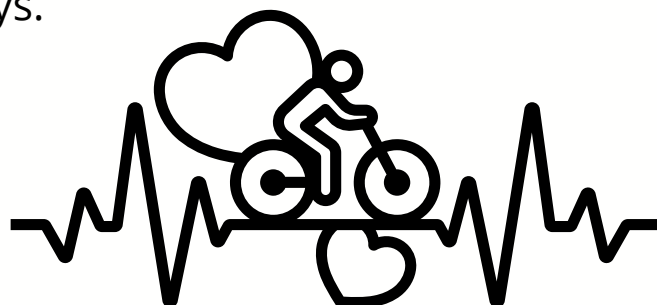
Our thanks to Dave Churchill for this detailed report and for all he does around our Church!



How my E-Bike has Given Me Freedom

Retirees often want to try new things they never had time to do before. They might volunteer, join clubs and/or travel. One thing I have done is join a bicycle club through a seniors' group. That group offers many activities, and I chose cycling. The first year or two, I was able to keep up with the group on my pedal bike, and then I found hills more difficult. So I invested in an e-bike and it opened up a whole new world for me. I still get exercise and I can now get up the hills far more easily with that pedal assist. Its battery makes an e-bike heavier than regular bikes and I had to learn how to handle that extra weight, especially on the sharp corners. But as I became comfortable with it, I was amazed at how many beautiful things there are in Calgary to be seen and experienced from bicycle pathways throughout the city. Along community greenways, we get to see lovely homes and gardens not visible from the streets. As we ride along Fish Creek and the Bow and Elbow Rivers, we see many types of animals and birds. One lovely trip was along the Bow Valley Parkway from Banff to Johnson Canyon, but we did not see any wildlife. However, the next day on our Calgary ride in Fish Creek Park, we saw lots.

The highway from Banff to Johnson Canyon is closed to traffic but open to cyclists from May 1 to June 25 and from Sept 1 to 30. Numbers in our cycling group range anywhere from 12 to 30 people. Little kids love us when we ride by, and they wave and call out to us. Once we were asked if we were an Olympic group! Our club is called 'The Old Spokes' and we have bright red and yellow jerseys, so maybe that is understandable. It's impressive when you see 20 people riding single file along a pathway wearing these jerseys.



Some pathways are for bicycles only, some in the downtown core have designated bike lanes with special bike traffic lights, and most pathways are shared by walkers and those on wheels. I have found that some people wearing headsets don't hear our bells or our voices. Especially when there are children on the path, we really slow down, call out, and ring our bells. Our leader will announce to the people we pass how many are coming. These procedures make our rides safe as well as enjoyable.

We also go to surrounding towns like Airdrie, Okotoks and High River. These towns have some wonderful pathways with lots of history along the way. One trip I was on took me further afield; it was a stay in Cranbrook, BC, which involved doing the 'North Star Rails to Trails' from Cranbrook to Kimberley. A wonderful ride! In my newfound freedom, I have met interesting people, heard many biking stories, and experienced some of the great country that is our Canada.



Thank you, Joyce Duncan,
for this great submission!

Update on Jedda's Training

Already, 8 months old, Jedda, a future guide dog with the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) regularly attends services at Red Deer Lake United Church. Jedda is a curious, confident, and very social black lab/golden retriever cross.

My name is Jackie Walters and I am Jedda's volunteer puppy raiser for the CNIB. Jedda...which means 'young wild goose' in an Australian Aboriginal language...wears her yellow "Future guide dog" vest to church and to all outings. When she wears her vest, she is in training, learning how to behave appropriately and ignore distractions so she can keep her future partially-sighted or blind handler safe.

A Bit About the CNIB Guide Dog Program

Currently, there are about 10 volunteer puppy raisers in the Calgary area, with pups ranging from 8 weeks old to 15 months old. Under the guidance and supervision of a Puppy Development Trainer, our role is to introduce the pups to basic training and help them become comfortable with various sensory experiences. There are also several CNIB-approved puppy boarders available to care for the pups for a few hours, a weekend, or even a few weeks when needed. Besides the Calgary area, puppies are being raised in or near Regina, Winnipeg, Toronto, Ottawa, and Halifax.

The puppies live with their puppy raisers until they are about 12-15 months old, then they graduate to attend formal training at the state-of-the-art Canine Campus in Carleton Place, near Ottawa. Puppies that graduate from the approximately 6 months of formal training are matched with partially-sighted or blind people who have been successful in their application for a guide dog that will change their lives forever.

Questions I Get Asked a Lot

Doesn't she get to play and just be a puppy?

Absolutely she gets to play and be a puppy. She is in training when she is in church, stores, concerts, markets, restaurants, libraries, on transit, etc., learning to behave appropriately so we get invited back and to prepare for her role as a CNIB Guide Dog. Apart from those situations, she is a puppy and plays freely with family, friends, and other fully-vaccinated friendly dogs.

Does it cost a lot?

Time-wise, yes. For everything else, no. The CNIB pays for or supplies everything else, including vet visits, medications, food, bedding, food bowl, some toys, leashes, collars and vests as the dogs grow. They even provide a backpack to keep everything in.

Why can you give her cuddles and I can't?

The person with the leash, or handler, is her world when she is in her vest. If people come up to her it takes her focus away from her training. When she is out of her vest and permission is given, you are welcome to interact with her.

Why does she jump up?

Jedda is sorry about that and appreciates your patience. She is learning to greet people appropriately, but is still a puppy. She's working on it!

Please feel free to reach out with any other questions.

Puppy raisers are desperately needed. If you, or anyone you know, might be interested in finding out more about volunteering with the CNIB Guide Dog Program, please visit <https://www.cnib.ca/en/volunteer-cnib-guide-dogs?region=ab>

Also, AMI TV has a heartwarming and informative 6-episode series Blind Trust: A Guide Dog's Journey, which tells the story of the CNIB Guide Dog Program, from puppy raising to being home with their partially-sighted or blind partners: <https://www.ami.ca/Blind-Trust/episodes>

Thank you, Jackie Walters,
for the update!





GOOD FOOD BOX PROGRAM

The Good Food Box Program, (GFB) is a program under the Community Kitchen Program of Calgary, whereby anyone can purchase boxes of fresh fruits and vegetables at an affordable price. The Good Food Box Program offers a hands-up approach, opposed to a hands-out. We offer all Calgarians and those in the surrounding areas, access to sustainable nutritious boxes of fruits and vegetables, to ensure that no one has to go hungry. The boxes are assembled by dedicated volunteers, who along with The Community Kitchen, desire to see individuals and families accessing nutritious fruits and vegetables at an affordable price.

BOX OPTIONS

Small Box: \$30

15-20lbs* of fruits and vegetables

Medium Box: \$35

25-30lbs* of fruits and vegetables

Large Box: \$40

35-40lbs* of fruits and vegetables

Each Good Food Box contains a combination of fruits and vegetable. The content varies weekly due to seasonal availability. The boxes contain the maximum produce to ensure our clients are getting the most value for the price. *Please note weights are approximate.

There are many depots and deliveries!

For further information contact Lorrie Herrick 403 538-7386
or Judy Andersen 403 538-7387

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 **Bill Holman**.

Bill has been our church caretaker for the past twelve years! We are very lucky to have a man of his dedication and conscientiousness looking after the maintenance of the RDLUC building. In reminiscing about his life, Bill says he has loved this area from the time his mom and dad (who was in the armed forces) moved to Calgary when he was a lad of fifteen. Originally, he trained to be a chef and was employed in that capacity by the Beefeater and Caesar’s Steakhouse for twenty years.



Then he decided to form his own cleaning company and, for a while, had seven different medical centres as clients. “That was far too much work, though,” he admits. “When I came to this church, I decided I’d rather just be a salaried employee here.”

What does Bill value about us? “Well, I like the hours,” he grins. “I’m not as young as I used to be, and I’ve developed several health problems over the years. One of the side effects of a medication I take is fatigue. So, even though I’m not afraid of work, I now have to pace myself far more carefully than I used to. Typically, I just work mornings, nine to noon, on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, and one hour in the afternoon, three-thirty to four-thirty—because of the daycare that rents our facility. I can handle that just fine.”

But it's not only the hours Bill praises. The number-one thing he values here is that he has come to know, as friends, quite a few very nice people. As a result, he attends Sunday services and has become a congregant as well as an employee. "Even after I retire, I'll continue to come," he vows. "Being here is like belonging to a big family. You share in all the joys and sorrows, and you feel like the people are glad you're there."

Regrettably for us, Bill has announced his upcoming retirement. March 28th will be his last day. He looks forward to relaxing, getting into some reading, and possibly doing some travelling. When asked if he'd be willing to stay a bit longer, if necessary, to assist a replacement, he nods slowly. "If there's something I can show a newcomer, sure," he says amenably. "I'm always glad to help."

And it's that quality in Bill as a staff member that we'll miss a great deal. We're so happy he won't really be gone from our midst because he has chosen to be part of our church family.

Our thanks to Fran Porter for this submission



Snoopy Wisdom

A Strong Friendship

doesn't need daily conversation or being together. As long as the friendship lives in the heart, true friends never part.



You are VERY Special

No matter how stressed you are, remember how blessed you are



I love the kind of hugs where you can physically feel the sadness leaving your body



Everyone Smiles in the Same Language!



A giggle a day, keeps the grumps away!



♥ Snoopy

WHAT IF TODAY WE WERE JUST GRATEFUL FOR EVERYTHING



RDLUC MEMORIES



Rosemary Howard (nee Ansell) of Calgary, AB, passed away peacefully on Thursday August 31, 2023, at the age of 70 years.

Born and raised in London England, Rosemary was a proud Londoner who regaled her daughters with stories of her youth spent shopping, attending rock concerts, and dancing in reggae clubs. During this time, Rosemary worked for M15, the UK counterintelligence and security agency, and she took great pride in that! She met her husband Rob in 1971, married in 1978, and decided to relocate to Calgary in 1979, where they raised their two daughters Sarah and Claire.

Rosemary loved to travel, and one of her most memorable adventures was a trip to Australia to reunite with close friends of 38 years. Friends were extremely important to her. The highlight of her year was her annual trip to Waterton, where she and her closest friends would play golf by day and reminisce over tequila by night. As teenagers, her daughters joked that she had a better social life than they did, because she belonged to book clubs and our church Faith and Coffee group, as well as enjoying golfing, yoga, theatre, and hosting her signature 'gourmet English dinners'.

Rosemary will be remembered for her warmth, kindness, and incomparable sense of humour. She leaves behind Rob (her husband of nearly 45 years), her dear daughters, her beloved cousin Sue Allen, her rescue pup Toby, and countless close and loving friends. She fought a courageous 21-year battle with cancer and lived to enjoy one last glass of Pinot Grigio! This fine lady will be sorely missed by us all.



I knew Rosemary for about thirty years. We attended Midlands United church together before it amalgamated with RDLUC. She always had a smile and never wanted to bother others with her problems. When I needed a favour, she was always there. A truly lovely lady! I will miss her tremendously.

Margaret Boone

Our thanks to Margaret Boone
for this lovely tribute.



Blue Christmas Service

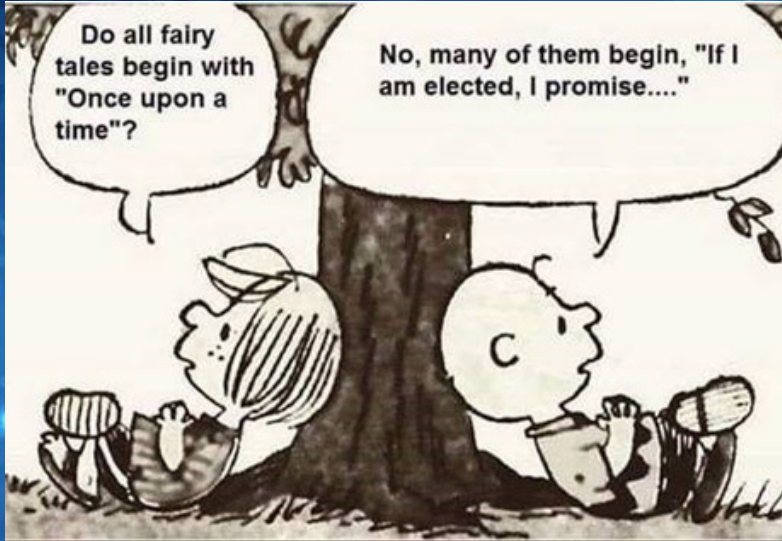
Perhaps Christmas will not be such a joyful occasion for you this year. The cause may be economic realities of today, loss of a loved one, your health, worries about world crisis, family dynamics, or a myriad of other things. Still, remembering the meaning of Christmas and the beauty of its message that originated over 2,000 years ago, may be something you consider meaningful if not essential.

In that case, the Blue Christmas service, presided over by Rev. Grant Dawson and the Congregational Care team, is for you. It will be a contemplative, prayerful service with quiet music and with prayer- and candle-lighting stations available. Healing stations will also be available following the service, as will refreshments and conversation.

If you need a more subdued and reflective way to observe the Christmas season, we hope to see you there on December 10th at 7:00 p.m. in the RDLUC sanctuary.

Anne Welsh, Wilma Clark (the Congregational Care Team)

YOUR SMILE FOR THE DAY



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

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 red deer lake united church

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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 f.porter@shaw.ca

The next submission deadline is

December 4, 2023.