

#### Greetings friends,

It's that time of year again, the beginning of the Christian year—the start of Advent. I suspect that for many, this feels like the start of the Christmas Season. For the retail industry Christmas began weeks, if not months ago. The swirl of lights, ribbons, greenery, and garland bring with it a feeling of celebration and joy, and many are ready for a month of Christmas busyness and magic. And so, I understand when congregation members become irritated by ministers who insist on holding off on Christmas carols and at least some decoration until later in the season. But...I am one of those annoying ministers. And I want to tell you why.

It's because we need the whole story. The story of Saint Nicholas in our culture is far poorer because we have forgotten how it begins. It never began with a jolly man distributing gifts on Christmas Eve to good little children and coal to those who didn't behave. The story began in the 3 rd century in the village of Patara in modern day Turkey with a young man named Nicholas whose wealthy parents died while he was still young. Dedicated to following Jesus, he used the whole of his inheritance to serve those who were suffering and in need. He later became a bishop and there are many stories and legends about his generosity. Perhaps the most well-known is how he saved three girls from being forced into prostitution by secretly dropping bags of gold coins through the window of their house so their father could pay a dowry for each one and thus, save their lives. Saint Nicholas' generosity became legend because it broke into a world of longing and suffering. Because we have forgotten the beginning of the story, the ending is far poorer for it. We need the story whole.

In our hearts we long for whole stories.

Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol is a good example. What would that tale be if we simply skipped ahead to Scrooge rather hysterically dancing about his bedroom and yelling out his window? If that was the only part we received, we might imagine Scrooge was simply unwell or had imbibed too much Christmas wine. We need the whole story...and we want it. We want to know who he was and how he became that way. We want to know his pain and suffering and the pain and suffering he caused others. We need to see him engage with the spirits and be transformed. Even if we love happy endings, the richness and depth of his joy could not exist apart from the rest of his story and so we take it in, from beginning to end. We need the story whole.

The birth of Jesus is a whole story. And it begins with a suffering people—a people with a past, a present, and a future. And so, this Advent, I invite you to enter into the story long before "Away in a Manger" and "Joy to the World." I invite you to enter the story with a people who were waiting and longing for a birth that would transform their mourning to laughter and their suffering into joy. Because we too need the whole story.

Blessings, Rev. Carrie



#### Christmas Eve Announcement

In the past, we have had two (or more) ministers who led our Christmas Eve Services, or we had the two services at different times to accommodate one minister. We have decided to try having Rev. Carrie alternate leading services at each church. This year Rev. Carrie will lead Christmas Eve at Zion-Calvin while a congregation member leads at St. Paul's. Next year, reverse! Both services can then take place at 7pm without Carrie needing to create a clone.





#### BOOK SALE

Fill up your stockings at the Book Sale!

South Central Regional Library will be holding their annual book sale at St Paul's this year in the CEU Hall. Friday December 2<sup>nd</sup> and Saturday December 3<sub>rd</sub>

**Cookie Walk** - Please donate your favourite Christmas cookies and squares. These should be things that are finger foods: cookies, decorated cookies, tarts, dainties, slices etc. Please no cakes or things that are gooey.

There will be a sign up sheet in the narthex.

Please have your baking in the church kitchen <u>before noon on Friday Dec 9</u> and roughly itemize the ingredients ( ie contains nuts, or gluten free ). Then come and fill up a provided box with your choices. \$8.00/dozen We will be serving tea and coffee and cookies so join us for your afternoon coffee break. Details on Poster farther on in the newsletter.

This is a fundraiser for local outreach projects such as the Chaplaincy program at BTCH, Rock Lake Church Camp, Many Hands etc.





## Poinsettias

The Poinsettias will be arriving on Dec 2 and will be in the Sanctuary of both church until after church on Dec. 11 at which time, with alittile help they will be delivered to members of the congregation who have have had family loss in the past year, home bound members, and members who are residents of Personal Care Facilities. There will be a list to sign up to help deliver and if you would like to donate to help cover the cost please indicate so on your donation envelope.





## Soup & Dessert Lunch

## Friday, November 18, 11:30am - 1:00pm







# St. Paul's United Church 353 Thornhill St., Morden- Dine-in

Takeout available by pre-registering at the Church Office

204-822-4508 before Nov 17

**Pembina Parish Outreach Group** 

### **Christmas Cookie Walk**

Choose your favourites from dozens of varieties of cookies and dainties \$8.00 per dozen
Friday, December 9th
2:00pm - 5:00pm
Join us for Tea / Coffee and cookies



## St. Paul's United Church

353 Thornhill Street, Morden
Proceeds for local Charities
Pembina Parish Outreach Interest Group



Pembina Parish Fundraising

#### Christmas Concert

## Thursday December 15<sup>th</sup>

Time: 7pm

St Paul's United Church, 353 Thornhill Street, Morden

Join us for a festive evening featuring
St Paul's Choir
Douglas Kuhl School of Music
Strings Ensemble and Senior Choir

**Entry:** by donation

(Donations \$25 or greater will be issued a donation receipt)

limited seating, pre-book your seat today

204-822-4508 or 431-774-4508 or office@pembinaparish.com

\*\*we are recommending masks be worn during the concert\*\*



#### **Dates to remember**

Nov. 20: Eternity Sunday – we will light candles in memory of loved ones who have died

Nov. 27: First Advent - Celebration of Communion

Dec. 4: Second Advent – Wear your PJ's to church Sunday (related to the story)!

Dec. 11: Third Advent

Dec 15th 7pm Christmas Concert

Dec 18th – Sunday Schools will be leading the services

Dec 24<sup>th</sup> – 7pm is Christmas Eve services at both churches.

No service on Dec 25th and Jan 1st.

There will be a pre-recorded short service online (YouTube) for those dates

#### St. Paul's Sunday School Advent Activities

With only two weeks until Advent, we are busy planning for some big events. As we have done in previous years, we will be collecting donations for 1JustCity (formally known as St. Matthews Maryland). Boxes for donations will be setup from Sunday, November 27th until Thursday, December8th. Please see News and Notes for suggestions

## Mark your calendars!

December 18th our Sunday School will be leading the congregation through the Christmas story from different perspectives. Invite friends and family to join us on this magical day.

There will be no Sunday school on Dec.25th and Jan. 1rst. We will return on Sunday Jan. 8th.





#### Let's Celebrate!

On Nov. 13<sup>th</sup> we welcomed 5 new members to St. Paul's by transfer of membership. Don and Lenore Weir (from Miami), Faun and Glennis Scott (from Carman), and Charlie Vanstone (from Miami). We are so grateful to have them join Pembina Parish!

On Nov. 13<sup>th</sup> we also welcomed 3 children to the Zion-Calvin church family by baptism! Jordyn Rae Cousins, child of Christy Cousins and Kip Wyatt and Sienna Leeann Faux, children of Jennifer Ching Faux and Curtis Faux. Three cheers for three beautiful children!





