



St. George's Anglican Church News from the Pews

Christmas 2024

From the Rector

"Christmas 2024: Joy to the World!"

Here at St. George's, we recently marked the beginning of the season of Advent with an amazing service of lessons and carols. Now Advent is my favourite time of year when my thoughts turn towards Christmas and all of the preparations I want to do and need to do. Sure there is the usual home baking, setting up the Christmas tree, stringing lights, and putting up decorations.

But more importantly, Advent is also a time when we the church take these four weeks as a time of anticipation and preparation for the celebration of the Nativity. The theologian Frederick Buechner put it this way: "The extraordinary thing that is about to happen, is matched only by the extraordinary moment just before it happens." This extraordinary moment we call Advent. It is where we live in the moment before the big moment.

However, this time of year can be very difficult for many people. It can be a time when we deeply grieve the loss of loved ones. It can be a time when we recall family fights or relationships that have dissolved. Or it can be a time when we remember the dreams we used to have, and dreams that we have long since given up on.

And so what often happens is our hearts build up layers of resistance, and we close ourselves down because we don't want to be hurt or have our hopes crushed. But when we close ourselves down like that, we lose the ability to be surprised, to be filled with wonder and awe and anticipation, and to be genuinely grateful.

And so Advent is a season where we open ourselves up to God, and where we ask God to heal those places where our hearts have been broken; where we've been beaten up and knocked around, and have become cynical or bitter or frustrated, or maybe have even flirted with despair.

Advent is a season when we practice the discipline of anticipation. It's when we become acutely aware that there still are new things to discover in this world that can awaken our souls. Advent is the season in which we live with an expectation that Jesus is going to come. We don't know how, but we take this moment before the moment to invite him into areas of our life that are deeply personal, areas that aren't fun to explore, areas in which we grieve, and we ask him to heal us, because we can't do it on our own.

Edward Hays writes that Advent is a season in which we should, "take time, slow down, be still, and be awake to the divine mystery that looks so common and so ordinary, and yet is so wondrously present." And yet for so many of us, Advent is the busiest, craziest, most stressful time of year. And if we can get through it without ending up on the six o'clock news, we are oddly pleased.

Continued...

And so I invite you on behalf of our church family to join us at St. George's throughout this season of Advent and Christmas, to take the time you need to slow down, heal, and rediscover the hope, peace, joy and love that we celebrate during this time.

This Sunday, December 8th, we will be celebrating the Feast of St. Nicholas. Then on Sunday December 15th, we will hear and reflect upon the story of the Angel Gabriel visiting Mary. On December 22nd, our scripture will focus on Mary's visit with her cousin Elizabeth, and Mary's song of praise known as the Magnificat.

Then on Tuesday, December 24th, our Christmas Eve liturgies begin at 5:00 pm with a family service in which our young people will put on a Christmas pageant, along with carols and the celebration of the Eucharist.

Next at 7:00 pm we will have a Community oriented Christmas service with lots of carol singing, a couple of readings, and a short reflection. Finally, a traditional Christmas Eve service with the eucharist will open at 10:00 pm with a musical prelude, and then officially begin at 10:30 pm. On Christmas Day, we will also be offering a Eucharist at 10:00 am.

It is my prayer that you will experience God's peace, presence and joy that your sanctuary can provide during the Advent and Christmas season, and that you will be moved and inspired by our worship. I look forward to seeing you all and I wish you and your family a blessed and merry Christmas.

Yours in Christ,
The Rev. Victor Kischak
Pastor, Priest & Rector

From the Wardens

From the Wardens: The Word Became Flesh - A Christmas Reflection

"And the Word became flesh and took up residence among us, and we saw his glory, glory as of the one and only from the Father, full of grace and truth." - John 1:14

As Christmas approaches, we are invited once again to reflect on the mystery and wonder of the Incarnation: God stepping into humanity, taking on flesh, and dwelling among us. In John's Gospel, this profound truth is encapsulated in a single poetic sentence, offering a glimpse of Christ's divinity and the glory of His coming. By contrast, Matthew and Luke give us vivid, detailed narratives of Jesus' birth, while Mark omits the event entirely. These diverse accounts remind us that the story of Christ's birth is both simple and infinitely profound, capable of touching each of us in personal and meaningful ways.



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A Season of Emotions and Reflection

Advent and Christmastide bring a kaleidoscope of emotions.

For many, this is a time of joy, gathering with loved ones around the Christmas tree, exchanging gifts, and sharing meals. The warmth of community and the sparkle of festive lights often evoke gratitude and celebration.

At the same time, Christmas can be a bittersweet time, marked by the memories of loved ones no longer with us. The empty chair at the table can remind us of loss, yet it also invites reflection on the hope that Christmas brings: the promise of Emmanuel, "God with us," who comforts the brokenhearted.

And for many, Christmas is a season of bustling activity. From braving the crowded shops to preparing festive meals, or wrapping up work before the year's end, the chaos can sometimes overshadow the beauty of the season. Yet even in the busyness, there is an opportunity to remember the quiet wonder of that first Christmas night—a moment of divine simplicity that changed the world forever.

At St. George's, our shared traditions—such as the Advent Carol Service, the bustling Christmas Market, and the reverence of Christmas Eve services—offer moments to connect deeply with the season's meaning. Through these communal activities, we encounter grace, joy, and peace, experiencing the love that binds us together as a church family.

Finding Meaning in the Mystery

Each of us approaches the story of Jesus' birth differently, just as we experience the Christmas season uniquely. The Gospels provide space for us to see ourselves in the story—whether in the quiet wonder of the shepherds, the joyful proclamation of the angels, or the awe of the Magi who followed a star. These narratives remind us that Christmas is not merely an event to be celebrated but a profound truth to be lived: God's love breaking into our world, offering redemption and hope.

As we move through Advent into Christmastide, let us open our hearts to the fullness of this season. Whether we are rejoicing in the present, reflecting on the past, or looking with hope to the future, the message of Christmas is for all of us: God's grace is sufficient, His joy is boundless, and His truth endures forever. May you find peace and renewal in the light of Christ this Christmas.

Giesela Goetz

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Rani Varkey

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Bruce Carrick

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Treasurer's Report

The amount received from Identified givers year to date until November is up \$17K from November of last year, with open collections up \$2.5K. Total offerings are up; however, \$71,625 of that was from special one-time gifts. Without these special gifts, total offerings are up \$20K from November 2023. Total revenue is up \$28K YTD from last year without the special gifts. This is mainly due to parking revenue increasing as we rent out more spots and an increase in Easter and Lent givings.

On the expense side, Maintenance costs are on par with 2023. Expenses for Office & Accounting are \$4K higher than last year with Printing and Stationery being 2.5 times what was spent in 2023 and over twice the budget. Building Recovery Costs – Other Users (shown in our budget as a negative expense rather than as income) are up from last year as rentals increase and are on target to meet the budgeted income of \$25K. Overall total expenses are only slightly higher than last year at \$442K and should stay within the total budget of \$492K.

Our Expenses over Revenue are lower than last year at -\$41K which would be -\$123K without the special gifts; however, that is still better than 2023 which was -\$144K. However, it will be the Christmas season that we will rely on to make our budget and balance the books.

How can you help?

The best thing you can do for St. George's is to make regular, generous offerings to the church. You might consider Pre-Authorized Giving if you haven't already. Simply fill out the form (download it from our website or contact the office for one) and your gift will come directly out of your bank account. No more having to remember an envelope every Sunday!

Other ways to donate include:

- Mail a cheque to the church
- Drop off cash or a cheque at the church during business hours (call ahead)
- By e-transfer to bookkeeper@saintgeorge.ca
- On our website using a credit card

	Actual Jan-Nov 2024	Actual Jan-Nov 2023	Budget 2024
Total Revenue	\$367,667	\$270,052	\$418,350
Total Expenses	\$441,895	\$439,420	\$491,594
Net Revenue	-\$40,889	-\$144,013	-\$73,244

Christmas Service Schedule

December 24 – Christmas Eve

5:00pm Family Service with Pageant and Communion

7:00pm Community Service with Readings & Carols

10:00pm Musical Prelude

10:30pm Traditional Christmas Eve Service with Communion

December 25 – Christmas Day

10:00am Holy Eucharist (BAS)

