

MCCLURE UNITED CHURCH

NEWSLETTER – December 2020

THOSE WHO DREAM

Advent has always been my favourite season in the church year. I appreciate so much the time to reflect on Hope, Peace, Joy and Love as I prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ. This year I am excited to be offered the opportunity to also reflect on “dreaming”.

This Advent we will be using a resource called “Those Who Dream” as the foundation for our worship and mid-week reflections. This resource was created by Sanctified Art, a team of artists in ministry who create multimedia resources for worshipping communities.

Included in the Older Adult Advent Kit is a devotional booklet that was part of this resource. It is a beautiful booklet with daily Advent reflections, poetry and images. (NOTE: These booklets are available to anyone who would like one. Request one at the church office or go to our website for a free download.)

Below is the text from the opening page of the devotional:

“Psalm 126 opens with the line: “When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream.”

What does it look like to live as those who dream? How can we embody and bring forth God’s dreams? How do we dream of a better world when our current one feels harrowing and disorienting?

The prophets, the psalmists, John the Baptist, Mary, Elizabeth, Joseph, Simeon, Anna, the shepherds and the Magi—they were all dreamers. They received, discovered, and responded to God’s dreams for the world. In Advent, we step into the mystery and awe of God’s dreams and pray they shape our reality.

This devotional is for the dreamers in all of us—those who dream of a deeper connection with God and those who dream of a better world. It’s for those who dream of comfort and for those who have given up on their dreams. It’s for those whose dreams have been crushed and for those who show us that dreams take time. And so, as you walk through these prompts and readings day by day, may you dream alongside prophets and angels, Mary and the Magi. Together, may we seek and sow God’s dreams for our world.”

Together, may we seek and sow God’s dreams for our world.

Many blessings to you this Advent season,
Rev. Laura Fohse

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WE’RE MOVING ONLINE

Our newsletter is now available on our website, www.mcclureunitedchurch.org, and will also be sent out to those on our email list.

If you still wish to receive the paper copy version of our newsletter via mail, please contact the office at (306) 373-1753 or by email at mcclureunitedchurch@shaw.ca.

Thank you for reading! We hope you continue to enjoy the content and stay up-to-date with our church community.

THANK YOU

BRENDA ZUK, OUR RETIRING NEWSLETTER EDITOR

The congregation of McClure wishes to express our thanks to Brenda Zuk who has been the amazing and diligent editor of the McClure Church newsletter for many, many years!

What a wonderful job you took on and did for us, Brenda. You always put out an informative, attractive, easy to follow newsletter. We wonder how many times you worked overtime because we didn't get our submissions in by the Sunday deadline!

Thank you for this gift you so ably gave, to the life and work of our congregation, Brenda.

TERRY CUTLER

On behalf of the congregation of McClure, we thank you so much Terry, for your leadership as Chair of Support Services these past years. Your volunteerism goes above and beyond! Your knowledge, expertise and capable wisdom has been a benefit to all. Most of us didn't actually see how you and your committee managed a large budget and the many tasks attributed to the work of looking after the property and building; everything from cleaning the carpets, to stocking the kitchen, up-dating computer software, or audio and lighting equipment, etc, etc, etc!

You have been and are a blessing to us all.

RON FORD

Thank you so very much Ron, for your many years of volunteerism on behalf of the Support Services Committee and IT Committee. You have offered freely your wealth of knowledge and with it your time to accomplish so many tasks large and small so that our congregation might live and worship to the fullest. We have seen you at the top of the dolly fixing lights, tinkering with computers and researching the technological needs of our church. Thank you for your gift to the life of our congregation.

WINTER READING LIST

Submitted by Sandy Hoenecke & Karl Lenz

As the days get chillier and snow starts falling, curl up with one these recommended books to read this winter.

The Dearly Beloved by Cara Wall

Follow two couples through decades of love and friendship, jealousy and understanding, forgiveness and commitment. It's a poignant meditation on faith and reason, marriage and children, and the ways we find meaning in our lives.

The Book Charmer by Karen Hawkins

A story about a sleepy Southern town, two fiercely independent women, and a truly magical friendship. Prepare to fall under the spell of a mesmerizing fusion of mystical and the everyday.

When We Meet Again by Kristin Harmel

Emily thinks she's lost everything... until a mysterious painting leads her to what she wants most in the world. But she still has secrets, ones she's been keeping locked inside for years. Will this journey bring her the strength to confront them at last?

Thelma: A Life in Pictures by Amy Jo Ehman

Thelma Stevens Pepper was born in Annapolis Valley, Nova Scotia, in 1920. A century later—from her adoptive home in Saskatoon—she reflects on a hundred years of life, love, and pictures.



BOARD REPORT

Ernie Barber, Board Chair

The Board of McClure United Church has an extra duty of responsibility to the congregation this year because of the constraints that have disrupted channels of communication and prevented holding congregational meetings. Please contact the church office at any time if there are matters that you want the Board to know.

The Board has been meeting since the spring using the Zoom computer conferencing platform. We held regular monthly meetings through to the end of June, took July off and then resumed regular monthly meetings in August. The Board also held two special meetings, one in September to approve the terms of reference for the administrative officer position (which led to the appointment of Avyn Koyl) and one in October where the decision was made to continue with the suspension of in-building worship services.

Much of the work of the Board is conducted by standing committees and task groups. The Building Access Task Group was created by the Board in May and has been incredibly helpful in keeping the Board and ministers up to date on public health guidelines and interpreting these for our own church. Trustees and Support Services collaborated with McClure Place Association to complete the last details of the Lease Agreement which is the legal framework for ownership and management of the property. One of the outcomes is that all of the property is now included within one comprehensive insurance policy. A working group from the Church and McClure Place has been reviewing and providing recommendations related to collaboration in capital planning and implementation of building major maintenance and renewal. Our Treasurer, Elaine, has been fabulous in monitoring Federal grant and loan programs and ensuring that McClure United Church receives benefits that are appropriate for our situation.

The Board is scheduled to approve the 2021 operating and capital budgets at its next meeting at the end of November. The goal this year has been to move the budgeting process to the fall so that the annual budgets would have force at, or close to, the beginning of the fiscal year. Notwithstanding the many challenges, the intention is to hold a congregational meeting early in

2021 to seek approval of the budgets and to connect with each other on the life and work of our church. Watch for details as they become available.

The Board mandate focuses much of its attention on oversight and management of resources – personnel, finances and property. We remind ourselves regularly, though, that everything we do is in support of our mission. The pandemic has exposed challenges and yet demonstrated that we are “the church” even when our building is inaccessible. We miss especially the connections that are made practical by having a building, yet we continue to be the church, living out our commitment to be a Christian community of faith, boldly proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world through our attitudes, actions and words. Our ministers and volunteer leaders have demonstrated great commitment and creativity to ensure that worship, faith development, pastoral care and outreach remain central to our life and work as a community of faith.

INHERIT THE MIRTH *by Cuyler Black*



COMMITTEE UPDATES

STEWARDSHIP

Our committee has been preparing a 2021 budget that will be ready to use for the beginning of the 2021 year. This is a change from budget presentations previously when the budget was prepared after the end of the previous year and presented to the congregation to be accepted at the Annual Congregational Meeting in March or April. As a Board and Stewardship Committee, we feel that having a budget in place for the complete year rather than for 8 or 9 months of the year will lead to a more organized and efficient approach to the use of the finances of the church for the year.

We would also like to thank each and everyone of you who has been so dedicated to McClure United Church this year and especially during the past 8 months when our church has been closed due to the COVID-19 restrictions. Each of you contribute in many different ways to the life and ministry of your faith community and for this we thank you.

The Stewardship Committee wants to remind you that we did send a package recently by mail. It outlines the financial position of the church for 2020 along with the usual fall commitment card for your 2021 contributions along with a Faith In Action note if you are able and wish to increase your contributions for 2020.

Did You Know:

- A commitment through Pre Authorized Remittance (PAR) means that you don't have to find your cheque book, source a stamp, search for the address of the church and lick an envelope.
- PAR giving amounts can be changed at any time easily and confidently by letting the finance department of the church know and there is no service fee.
- Even small contributions to the church are important. A \$20.00 contribution can help in the printing and distribution of our newsletter for the year.

Please be sure that the church office knows your address, telephone number and email address so that you will receive all information from the church. This is very important during this time of COVID-19 and the church closure. We also require correct information for you to prevent delays when sending your income tax receipt for your 2020 contributions which will happen in early 2021.



MINISTRY AND PERSONNEL

Ministry Staff Time Off

With the encouragement of the Ministry and Personnel Committee and the support of the McClure United Church Board, Debra and Laura will be taking time to rest and renew from Friday, December 25th until Monday, January 4th.

Urgent matters and pastoral emergencies will be covered by Debra. Please contact her directly at (306) 382-2566. For less urgent items please call the church office – (306) 373-1753 and leave a message.

The Church office will be closed from December 25th until January 4th and the office staff, like our ministry staff, will be taking that time for rest and renewal.

M&P wishes our amazing staff and everyone a safe and spirit filled Christmas.

OUTREACH

A Huge McClure Thank You

Cosmo Industries sends McClure a great big thank you for the bottle drive that was held in the parking lot with proceeds totaling over \$2,000! That money will be put towards programming at Cosmo Industries. Well done, McClure.

Bee The Church

Thanks to the folks who bought honey at the bottle drive in October. We sold out our 96 jars of honey! But we can get more from local beekeepers, Joe and Janet Olson. So at all the upcoming events honey will be available again. It is \$5.00 a jar with profits going to Refugee projects. Hope to see you there.

Refugees Arrive

We have wonderful news to share: our refugee family has arrived. Mohammad Swid and Majed Khireddin and their two daughters Loujin (14) and Sham (11). They are originally from Syria and were waiting to come to Canada in Saudi Arabia. The family has relatives here who will help them begin their new lives. We are so glad they are here and safe. Stay tuned for how we might support and care for this lovely family.

Socks for the Homeless

Thank you to all who participated in our Socks for the Homeless campaign in November. The items will be handed out to men and women living on the street by Community Support Officers during the weeks leading up to Christmas.

God bless you and thank you for thinking of our most vulnerable citizens during the holiday season.

EGADZ Collection

Once again McClure is partnering with EGADZ to provide support to vulnerable teens and their families. This year we will be collecting specific items so there will be less sorting needed. EGADZ has identified these as priority items. Please add some to your shopping list. Health regulations require that items be unopened and/or in their original packaging.

Requests:

- Deodorant: male & female
- Toothbrushes and toothpaste
- Feminine hygiene items (tampons, pads)
- Toques, headbands, gloves and scarves
- Financial donations- make cheques to McClure mark EGADZ. Cash will be used to purchase a gift for each client.

Drop off items on Sunday, Dec 6, 11am-Noon or Monday Dec 7, 6-7:30 pm.

Thank you for reaching out a helping hand to these kids!

KAIROS

During this time of COVID-19, have you been looking for ways that you could safely become more knowledgeable about human rights/ ecological justice and for opportunities to be involved in related programs? KAIROS might be a valuable resource for you!

Through KAIROS, ten churches and religious organizations work together in faithful action for ecological justice and human rights in Canada and around the world. It is administered by the United Church of Canada. Their areas of work include: Ecological Justice, Gender Justice, Indigenous Rights, Migrant Justice and Prophetic Justice. Their website www.kairoscanada.org provides extensive information about the organization, their areas of work, current programs and ways that we can become involved from our own home. A link to their website can also be found on McClure's website (Media and Resources, Links to Partners).

REFLECTION

Rev. Debra Berg

“So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.” Luke 2:16-19 (NRSV)

Christmas will be different this year. There will be no Advent festival with our children decorating our big Christmas tree. We will not be lighting our beautiful Advent Candles each Sunday morning and the Cantata will not be happening. The Blue Christmas service will be offered online only and so too will the Christmas Eve worship. Christmas will be different this year.

Christmas will be different this year in our homes. Family gatherings will be small and traveling home for the holidays will be limited. Our Christmas party dress will stay in the closet and concert events will also move online.

Christmas will be different this year and one wonders if Christmas will feel like Christmas at all.

Mary was there that very first Christmas. She and Joseph did not expect to be held up in a barn, surrounded by animals and stinky shepherds when their precious baby boy was born. And yet God still came into the world. Jesus was born into unusual times, in a most unusual place to teach us the ways of love and life. There is no reason Christmas cannot come to us once again in these unusual times and to this most unusual place. God is like that, continually surprising us with love and life.

Mary was there that very first Christmas and she pondered all these things in her heart. Perhaps the call of this year's Christmas is to ponder all things in our hearts. To let go of all the outward signs of Christmas and find Christmas in our hearts a Christmas of love and life.

PRAYER

God of surprises, Christmas is going to be different this year and I am sad and mad about that. Let me feel the depth of my grief and then gently open my heart to what might come. The simple connections with loved ones on the phone, the twinkling of light in the dark, the kindness of a stranger, the beauty of a Christmas song, the pleasure of special baking, the simplicity of a sending a handwritten card. Sitting in prayer with you and listening to the blessings of my life and the opportunities yet to be discovered to love and serve.

Let Christmas be born in me even this year.

Amen.





CHRISTMAS TREE BLESSING

The season of Advent signals the beginning of the New Church year and it is a great time to think about starting some new family traditions. Some families have incorporated an advent wreath into their advent practices which provides a visual reminder of Jesus' approaching Birthday.

The Christmas Tree is another visual reminder. The custom of the Christmas tree was introduced in Germany in the 16th century. Legend tells us that the evergreen was chosen and decorated with candles to represent God's creation and the gift of God's Son as Light of the World. This tradition is continued today as we use evergreen trees, strings of lights, and ornaments to decorate the tree in our homes.

Moments that cause us to pause and shift gears like the beginning of the church year and preparing for Christmas happen once a year and sometimes come all too quickly. Providing opportunities to take a breath and find God's presence in these moments is important. This Christmas Tree Blessing has four steps: Caring conversation, Devotions, Service and Ritual.

1. Caring Conversation: once the tree is up and decorated take a moment to sit and chat with one another. Chat using one or all of the following questions.

- Choose a favorite ornament on the tree. Why did you choose this ornament? Is there a story about where it came from?
- For Parents and Grandparents: What is a memory you

have about putting up the Christmas tree when you were a child?

- Children: What do you look forward to the most as you are decorating the Christmas tree?

2. Devotions:

- Read the Christmas story from a children's book and talk about your favorite part of the story.
- Share the following Scripture lesson and think about or talk about how the reading relates to Christmas. Think about or talk about what it means to prepare for something special.

Isaiah 40: 3-5

A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

- 3. Service:** Make, in the shape of a Christmas tree, some decorations, ornaments, or cookies to give to neighbours and friends. Deliver them as a family.
- 4. Ritual:** Just before you light the tree gather around the Tree and share this blessing together:

This tree is a blessing to our home. It reminds us of the gift of Jesus. It stands in our home as a tree of light and as a sign of Jesus' presence with us as the Light of the World.

Let us pray: God of all Creation, we thank you for this tree. Bless us as we gather around it. May it light up our hearts with your hope, peace, joy and love, and may the gifts placed under it remind us of the great gift of your Son Jesus. Amen.

Light the tree.

(Thank you to Milestones Ministry for help with the idea and some of the content of this Blessing)

NEWS & UPDATES

IN-BUILDING WORSHIP UPDATE

We miss you and want to see you. But not yet.

The Board, working together with the ministry staff, Worship Committee, Ministry and Personnel Committee, and Building Access Task Group have decided that throughout Advent and Christmas, we will continue to worship online. In January we will reassess whether it's time to be worshipping in our building again. We believe that the best way to be a congregation right now is to not congregate.

Although our building is quiet, it's not totally empty:

- McClure Place has resumed their In-Motion activities, and occasional other small events in the Sanctuary, and residents are walking "the loop".
- Staff are occasionally working from the office,
- Some maintenance and computer upgrades are happening, and
- Meeting space for 12 step groups will continue to be a priority as well as other groups directly connected to our ministry and mission.
- Through advent, watch for special advent materials which our ministers and music personnel are putting together.

If you want to have an activity at the church please look at the guidelines and fill out the form on this page. And any time you have questions about access to the building, please contact me.

*Angie Bugg, Building Access Task Group
(306) 227-1270
angie.bugg@sasktel.net*

ADVENT KITS

Advent Kits are now available. Please let us know if you would like any of the following resources for celebrating:

- **Advent Candle Kit** to follow along Sunday morning candle lighting litany
- **Family Faith at Home Kit** - family devotions, Advent

calendar and activities for children, youth and their families

- **Older Adult Kit** - advent devotional and a special surprise

To request a kit, please call the church office at (306) 373-1753 or email mcclureunitedchurch@shaw.ca.

WELCOME AVYN

Join us in welcoming Avyn Koyl to McClure! Avyn has accepted the appointment as our new administrative officer and we are very excited to have her on our team. She was identified through an extensive search that generated a lot of interest from many highly qualified individuals.

Avyn has earned academic credentials in administration, recreation and leisure management. Her most recent work experience was as community programmer for the Town of LaRonge. Prior work experience was as an executive assistant with a rural municipality, recreation director for a seniors' residence, and owner-operator of a customer service business.

We are certain that you are going to like her. Avyn brings a wonderful energy to the office that compliments her impressive list of skills. Please send an email to mcclureunitedchurch@shaw.ca with your words of welcome and good wishes.

ATTENTION SASKTEL WEBMAIL USERS

Haven't received an email from us in awhile? We promise we haven't forgot about you!

In September, SaskTel began a rollout of a new spam filter and unfortunately this has prevented our weekly worship and updates emails from reaching the inbox of some friends with SaskTel email accounts.

The good news is that the emails should be in your spam folder and, if you wish to prevent this from happening again, you can choose to add us to your trusted senders list.

The steps for doing so can be found by searching "spam" on the support.sasktel.com website or by calling 1 (800) 727-5835.

EVENTS

ZOOM CONNECTIONS

Friday mornings at 10am

A place for the McClure Community to share information, discuss issues and connect with each other via Zoom.

Visit our website or Facebook page for information on how to connect.

VIRTUAL COMMUNION CELEBRATION

Sunday, November 29th at 1pm

We're trying something new!

Bring your bread and juice and join us via Zoom as we continue our tradition of celebrating the sacrament of Holy Communion on the 1st Sunday of Advent.

Please visit our website or Facebook page for information on how to connect or contact Laura at (306) 291-5838 or email laura@mcclureunitedchurch.org.

EGADZ COLLECTION

*Sunday, December 6th at 11am to Noon
Monday, December 7th at 5 to 6:30pm*

Item drop-off will be set up at McClure United Church. Remember: if you are entering the church you must wear a mask and sign in so that we have a list for contact tracing if needed.

For more information, read the Outreach Committee update on Page 5.

BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE

Wednesday, December 9th at 7pm

It has been our tradition to share in a time of worship early in Advent where we acknowledge that Christmas is, for some of us, a time of profound grief and heart ache. As we worship, we are reminded of God's companionship even in difficult times. This year a Blue Christmas service will available just like Sunday morning worship - an email will be sent to you with a link to the service.

I'm sorry we cannot be together but please know you are not alone.

WOMEN'S GATHERING

Saturday, December 12th at 8am

This group of faith filled McClure women continues to meet once a month early on a Saturday morning for conversation and connection. You are welcome to join in via Zoom. Send a note to Debra indicating you would like to come along debra.b@shaw.ca.

Next gathering is January 16th, 2021.

ADVENT CONCERT CELEBRATION

Sunday, December 13th at 7pm

Living Skies Regional Council is excited to offer a wonder-filled virtual evening of music and story for the entire family

Co-hosted by Lorne Calvert and Lindsay Mohn, the evening features music provided by Sacred Sounds Worship Band, a Christmas narrative from Jim Tenford, and production support from Cheri Uthe of Faith Productions.

For more information, visit: mcclureunitedchurch.org/advent-concert

MCCLURE UNITED CHURCH

www.mcclureunitedchurch.org

4025 Taylor Street East
Saskatoon, SK S7H 5N7

Phone: (306) 373-1753
Fax: (306) 373-3450

Email: mcclureunitedchurch@shaw.ca

Ministry Personnel
Rev. Laura Fohse
Rev. Debra Berg

Office Administrators
Avyn Kohl
Irene Lacoursiers

Music Coordinator
Shirley Blackburn

Communications Director
Andrew Wilson