

***"Called to be Servants of Christ in Our Community"***

**Niagara United Mennonite Church**

*~ Christmas Day ~*

*December 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016 at 11:00 a.m.*

**Gathering**

*Kathy Rempel*

**Call to Worship & Candle Lighting**

*John Tiessen*

**Worship through Song & Scripture**

*Rempels et al.*

**Reading: Matthew 2:9-10**

"Oh, beautiful star of Bethlehem" StS #32

**Reading: Luke 2:10-14**

"'Twas in the moon of wintertime" HWB #190

**Reading: Luke 2:16-20**

"Infant holy, infant lowly" HWB #206

**Video: "Christmas According to Kids"**

Offering - Focus on MCC Christmas Gifts

**Proclamation**

"The virgin Mary had a baby boy" HWB #202

**Reading: Isaiah 9:6**

"To us a child of hope is born" HWB #189

**Message: "Jesus is born!"**

*Stephen Cox*

**Sending**

**Reading: Psalm 126:2-3**

"Oh, how joyfully" ("O du fröhliche") HWB #209

**Benediction**

*Stephen Cox*

Today's Audio-Visual: Peter Janzen & Erik Metsa

Today's Nursery Volunteers: Christina Cox

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***"Called to be Servants of Christ in Our Community"*** expresses our desire to share our faith and love of Jesus Christ with all we meet. We welcome you and hope that your time with us will be enjoyable and enlightening. Families with children are invited to worship together with us in the service. For children 5 years old or younger who are not able to sit through the church service, there is a nursery downstairs, or a glassed-in room behind the sanctuary where you may sit with your baby and still follow the service. If you feel a sense of belonging, you are most welcome to be with us. Talk to us about how you can participate.  
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**Live Streaming Privacy Notice** – Our church services are live streamed over the internet, capturing the stage and up to the front half of the church in the picture that is transmitted. We encourage all ages to sit towards the front of the church to showcase our lively and active congregation! Thanks for your support.

**JOYS & CONCERNS:**

**Melanie & Matt Scott were blessed with a safe arrival at home** of a baby girl on December 17<sup>th</sup>. Rebecca Catherine is sister to Rachel and granddaughter to Linda & David Scott & Linda Willi Pankratz.

**Our condolences are expressed to the family of Anna Toews,** in the wake of her passing this past Wednesday, Dec. 21<sup>st</sup>. Her funeral was held on Friday. May the peace and love of Christ surround the family as they grieve her loss.

**Flowers have been placed at the front of the church today** in remembrance of Andrew Runge who passed away five years ago on December 24<sup>th</sup> at the age of 22. He is lovingly remembered by his parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. May God's Spirit and eternal hope ease the feeling of loss this Christmas season.

## WITHIN NIAGARA UM CHURCH:

**Holiday Hours** Please note that the church offices are closed for the holidays this week. Monday-Thursday the church is closed completely and on Friday the office is only open for the printing of the bulletin. Next week the church will be closed on Monday, January 2<sup>nd</sup> and re-opens for regular business on **Tuesday, January 3<sup>rd</sup>**. April and the staff thank the church for this holiday time of rest.

**Pastor David Lewis** is away visiting with his daughter, Michelle, and her family in Edmonton for the holidays. He will return to work on January 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Transitional Work Group Summary** - Please pick up the report at the Welcome Centre which summarizes the first Transitional Work Group session that was held in November. This update is designed for the congregation to be informed and included in the progression of this group.

**Junior Youth Friday, December 30<sup>th</sup> @ 6:00pm** Sponsors are putting on supper for the youth- come one, come all, and come hungry!

**Ladies of all ages from NUMC**, we will be having our monthly breakfast get together on **Thursday January 5<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 a.m.** We meet at The Red Rooster Restaurant (Mary Street in NOTL beside Tim Horton's). As always feel free to invite others. If you would like to be added to the email reminder list please contact Emily Fieguth at [emily@lawyersniagara.com](mailto:emily@lawyersniagara.com).

### **THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE (December 26<sup>th</sup> – January 1<sup>st</sup>)**

**Monday:** BOXING DAY - OFFICE CLOSED  
**Tuesday:** CHRISTMAS DAY STATUTORY HOLIDAY – OFFICE CLOSED  
**Wednesday:** OFFICE CLOSED  
**Thursday:** OFFICE CLOSED  
**Friday:** 6:00 pm Junior Youth Supper  
**Saturday:** New Year's Eve

### **Next Sunday, January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017– New Year's Day**

**9:30 am** German Choir Practice  
**10:00 am** German Worship Service – Message from Udo Woelke  
**11:00 am** Worship Service – Message from Greg Dick

Next week's Nursery volunteers: Laurene Nickel

*\*For a complete listing of church events, please see our online calendar on our church website.\**

## NIAGARA UM CHURCH FINANCIAL UPDATE:

**Thank you for all your generous donations!** I would like to wish everyone a blessed Christmas and express my thankfulness to you for supporting our church. But we still need approximately \$60,000 by the end of December to meet our budget of \$429,400. Please be generous so that we can meet all of our obligations. Donations can be made conveniently online, by debit, by direct bank or internet transfer, and of course by cash or cheque.

Offering of December 18 <sup>th</sup> : \$15,578.00			
Budget	\$14,198.00	MCC General	\$880.00
Christian Witness	\$20.00	MCC Haiti	\$70.00
Refugee Sponsorship	\$60.00	MCC Christmas Gifts	\$100.00
		MCC Famine Relief	\$250.00
<b>Attendance December 18<sup>th</sup>:</b> German Worship – 56 ; Worship Service - 145			

**Offering Focus** – Our weekly budget requirement is \$8,260. In addition to your budget commitment, this month we encourage your support of MCC. Donations can be directed to their overall operations (where most are needed), or you can specify specific projects such as food for the hungry, school or other relief kits, Generations at Risk (HIV/AIDS) or disaster relief. Please mark your envelope accordingly. Any church donations not allocated to a specific cause will be directed to our budget.

## **The Holy Way: Walking in the way of God's Heart**

Welcome to Advent 2016 "**The Holy Way: Walking in the way of God's Heart**", which celebrates the arrival of Jesus Christ, the embodiment of God's heart. Our invitation this year is to walk in the way of God's heart. This will mean that we first encounter the various character traits of God's revealed heart, and second that we shape our own hearts after His. Walking in the way reminds us that this is not a single step process or event; but that each decision to line our hearts up with God's draws us into and along His way.

God's heart is the emanating energy which creates the kingdom of God. When we walk in the way of God's heart, we will find that we are co-creating the reign of God here on earth.

What co-creating works might God have in mind for you this Advent?

### **First Advent: "Clothed in Christ"**

**November 27<sup>th</sup>**

**Message by Stephen Cox**

We live in a world that seems to carry a great deal of anxiety, spilling over into violent extremism in some places, and contained as fear and despair in others. These are anxious times and even the beauty that Christmas brings oftentimes does little to reduce the anxiety. To get to God's heart of peace, from a world of anxiety, we need to take a walk with Jesus.

### **Second Advent: "The wolf shall live with the lamb"**

**December 4<sup>th</sup>**

**Message by Nelson Kraybill**

This sermon will highlight the role of Mennonite World Conference as a global network of Anabaptist Christians who pool resources and collaborate to embody the peaceable kingdom vision of Isaiah 11. I will start with the image below by an American Quaker artist (Edward Hicks) who imagined European colonists dealing justly and fairly with native peoples. I will show a map of where Anabaptists live in the world, and tell a story or two about practical implications of being a people committed both to evangelism and justice/peacemaking.

### **Third Advent: "Getting the most out of Christmas"**

**December 11<sup>th</sup>**

**Message by David Lewis**

You will get the most out of Christmas when you view it as God's declaration of how much you matter to him.

### **Fourth Advent: "Restoration in Real Life"**

**December 18<sup>th</sup>**

**Message by Paul Schmidt**

### **Christmas Day Service: "Jesus is born!"**

**Message by Pastor Stephen Cox**

**December 25<sup>th</sup>**

## **MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA:**

As the calendar year ends, please know that your gifts to Mennonite Church Canada are growing disciples of Christ around the world. You can make a gift of healing and hope online at [www.mennonitechurch.ca](http://www.mennonitechurch.ca).

## **OUR COMMUNITY AND BEYOND:**

**The Community Breakfast Program in St. Catharines** heartily thanks the German and Candlelight choirs who generously donated many warm socks to the less fortunate. This kindness and generosity is much appreciated!

**MENNONITE BURIAL SOCIETY** The Annual General Meeting of the Mennonite Burial Society will be held on **Saturday, January 14<sup>th</sup> at 2 pm** in the Tabor Manor Chapel in St. Catharines. Please park in the Scott Street Church parking lot. Board and committee positions are available. For further information, please contact Barry Boese at 905-228-1850 or email [info@mennoniteburialsociety.com](mailto:info@mennoniteburialsociety.com).

**SILVER LAKE MENNONITE CAMP Fathers and Kids Retreat** –Don't miss out on this great winter experience, **January 13-15!** Skating on the lake, building snowmen and igloos, snowshoeing through the woods, roasting smore's over the campfire, playing board games and mini-sticks in the dining hall and watching Hockey Night in Canada on the big screen! Dads enjoy some free-time on Saturday morning on the couches by the fire (newspapers and coffee will be in abundance) while our staff provide some outdoor programming with the kids. Sounds too good to be true we know, but that's the

Fathers & Kids Retreat. **NOTE:** Father can be defined as any male adult role model or mentor. Retreat Cost: \$225 for Father and one Child (each additional child is \$50) To Register Online: <https://silverlakemennonitecamp.wufoo.com/forms/z12cq29710oob7d/> Or Contact Rebekah at 519-422-3200 or rebekah@slmc.ca with any questions.



It is hard to believe that another year has passed us by so quickly. Our work together in our second home has brought us much joy, and happiness. Sadly we had to say goodbye to some of our church family, such as Rudy, Sharon, Kenton and Sheryl. Thankfully God has provided us with Pastor Dave and so many wonderful people to lead our choirs! Our church family means so much to us and we keep you in our prayers daily. We know that God is directing our lives daily and He will provide us with direction and guidance. May You All experience a Joyous and Blessed Christmas, and a Wonderful New Year!

Blessings,  
Anita, Jeff, Megan, Chris & Joyce Friesen

#### CHRISTMAS GREETINGS TO THE CONGREGATION

The sending of Christmas greetings first happened with the angel's announcement to the Bethlehem shepherds – *"I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you."* Historically, followers of this Saviour have sent greetings to one another in celebration of his birth. In keeping with 'first greetings', this is my first opportunity to bring a Christmas greeting to you. I do so with this observation: there is a wonderful connection that happens between followers of Jesus as a result of the Christmas celebration. It is a mysterious connection in many ways. People from a variety of backgrounds and experiences find joy filled relationship from the power of a common word, *"a Saviour has been born to you."* Certainly I have found this common word to be a source of warmth, kindness, strength and hope since joining the church community here. I see a communal spirit formed around the central theme that in spite of the brokenness evident all around us, there is peacefulness to be found in the birth announcement of the angel to the shepherds that launched us on this 'greetings' course. However, I will also admit that at times there seems to be an uneasy hesitancy surrounding the declaration that a Saviour has come. How do we present this message with integrity? Not to unduly mix metaphors, but I see some direction in the visit of the Magi, outsiders to God's ways, as they journeyed to see the Christ child. The journey of these Eastern astrologers required enduring patience, a united effort, a giving posture, inquiring minds and celebratory worship to bring them into God's favour. If we are to move forward in this journey that God has us on with integrity, it will call for the same level of commitment. But my hope lies in the fact that God has not lost His 'star power' when it comes to guiding us in the discovery of His promised provision. So, I greet you with this assurance and call you to greet one another with the enduring word – *"God is with us."*

- Pastor David Lewis

## Come let us adore Him!

We have moved through another advent season on our way to this morning, Christmas morning!

The invitation to prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ never needs to get old, and become hollow traditionalism. There is always more room for Christ to be born in our hearts, minds, and lives.

That is why paying attention to advent in detail is helpful.

In our house we have several countdowns, to Christmas. The boys each have their own *playmobile* advent calendar, and they are excited each morning to discover another piece of an elaborate plastic nativity scene. Carston was so into it, that he finished 5 days early!

We also have a string of small stockings, where we place a Christmas related activity for each day of December. Everything from 'go and get the perfect family Christmas tree' to 'bake cookies' to 'make ornament gifts'. This year, on a whim I began drawing a holiday scene on our small task whiteboard, each day even I'm excited to see what detail I'll draw into the scene.

These daily personalized activities coincide with the habits of our church family, who pays careful attention to advent each year. Turkey Supper, first advent communion, Adventsfeier, Candlelight, Christmas Eve children's program, and now Christmas morning service provide a rhythm that is meant to catch us up in the story once again. To make fresh the age-old story that God loves us so much that He sent His son into the world to become like us in every way; in order that He could show us how to walk in the way of God's heart.

This advent we have been called to walk in the way of God's heart, and Jesus is the perfect representation of the way.

Practically speaking, the way for us this year has been a path of change, most notably we blessed and released Rudy and Sharon from their pastoral care, and welcomed Pastor Dave to lead us through a time of transition. Pastoral transitions are always full for a congregation, providing opportunities to reflect on the good ministry that has taken place, learning to let go of relationships that have been meaningful and helpful to us, and also forcing us to live in a liminal space of discomfort. *Liminal space is the space **between** what was familiar and comfortable and what will become our new normal.* Many of us have expressed anxiety and even some fear in light of our liminality, and that is okay, actually expected. My encouragement to us is to pray, to place our fears, longings, and hopes for our community onto Christ; but also to allow our uncertainty to open us up. The in between times are the perfect times (maybe the only times) where we can decide new things, change patterns, and become a new creation. May we tread carefully but boldly together in the path God has set out before us this coming year.

Jesus Christ, You who hold the world together by Your love, we rely on You.

Merry Christmas!

Stephen, Christina, Trent, and Carston Cox.

## Season's Greetings, Church Family!

This Christmas season, I reflect on the past year that I have shared here with you at Niagara UM and am thankful for the opportunity to journey another year together. For me, personally and professionally, 2016 was a year of many changes. The beginning of my year started out with a brand new job. At the beginning of January, I began work at a church in Welland, as my other part-time job in my time outside of NUMC. That has been really rewarding and in particular, I love ministering to the downtown Welland youth. My major highlight of 2016 was my train trip across Canada to BC & Alberta, which many of you read about in Life With Us. As I had communicated back in the spring, I once again became a student as I enrolled in part-time masters studies at seminary, which has proven to be a rewarding experience. The hosting term I was involved in through MCC ended with my IVEPer from India, which then allowed me to open my home and start a roommate relationship with a friend who needed a place to stay. In the early fall, I suffered a motor vehicle accident, and though I have been attending a lot of follow-up medical appointments, I am unfortunately still suffering the after-effects of that accident. My mom had a brief stay in the hospital, which was a scare to my family, however she is thankfully feeling better now. Thanks again to those of you who lifted her and my family in prayer and have continued to ask about her health.

As full as all of that sounds, I would say though that the most profoundly overarching theme for me in 2016 was pastoral change. I know I don't need to brief you on what that experience is like, since saying good-bye to the Dirkses and

welcoming Dave is still very fresh in our memories here at Niagara UM. However, I should include that the experience surrounded me doubly this year. While we were on our journey here at Niagara UM of pastoral transition, the other church I work for also said good-bye to our long-time minister in June, and also welcomed a supply minister in September. Working for two churches, a significant portion of my energy is invested in serving church leadership, which translates to pastoral relationships constituting the primary ones in my day to day life. That said, managing three pastoral good-byes this summer was particularly difficult.

Though this was a sad time for me, it gave me an opportunity to reflect on why I have positioned myself the way I have career-wise, and why I do what I do. As a result, I have found a deeper appreciation and love for the church, as the body of people that Christ desired us to be. Each connection that exists within our church community is so very special. Each bond, each relationship represents a connection anointed by God that positions us to uphold, encourage and strengthen one another. Let us cherish these, oh so precious relationships, and as we seek to find a new pastor, let this time be marked as a coming together of a unified body of passionate followers of Christ. At this special time of year, let us redirect the light we have received from God, by way of this church family into the areas of darkness around us in our own communities and lives. Thank-you all for the ways you have touched my life over the past year and the ways that you continue to inspire me.

May you all have a most blessed Christmas! I pray for the joy of Christ to fill your hearts and those of your loved ones this holiday season. May you draw closer to Jesus each day of 2017.

- April Michon

**NUMC Services & Sermons are available online.**

Individual Sermons or Sermon Series are available for purchase, formatted on CD or DVD. Please place your order through the church office.