



SUNSET UNITED CHURCH ADVENT 2011

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ADVENT SCRIPT

Advent Reflections

From Russell Mitchell-Walker



This life is a gift - and everything in it. Do I appreciate it?...

What do I have? Make no comparisons with anyone.

Have I taken more than I need?

What do I have to give?

Whom do I have to thank?

*Before you go out into public, look at your soul in the mirror. Forgive yourself.
Do this before anything else.*

Don't continue until you can do this.

Be comfortable with yourself. Be honest with yourself.

Confide in yourself. Love yourself.

These words of wisdom are from part of a poem, written by a youth in Daybook for New Voices. This week Marci and I, along with Marina Jeffery of the Stewardship committee, have been immersed in getting the stewardship materials ready for the congregation and our annual campaign. The beginning of this poem reminded me of our stewardship message. On our *Road to Abundance* it is important to be thankful, to live with gratitude and when we do, it often flows naturally to share generously as part of that gratitude. As we move into the Advent season, a time of preparing for

Christmas, we celebrate the love that breaks into our life in the Christ, the anointed one of God, the Messiah, the blessed one. Jesus came reminding us of that love of God, that power of grace and peace that is in each of us. I believe that is why Jesus said one of the greatest commandments is to love ourselves and love our neighbour in the same way. Jesus embodied all that God wants from humanity and Jesus shows us that we too can embody God. That is the message of Christmas. As we prepare for this wonderful celebration may we take time to remember this. It can be easy to get caught up in the commercialism and chaotic rush of Christmas. So let's breathe, and take time to remember what it is all about. We start the season this year by inviting our neighbouring community to join us at a *Community Christmas Celebration* November 25. I invite you to come and enjoy our Christmas Quiet evenings to keep you grounded and balanced this season. You may want to consider ways of sharing gifts this season that doesn't support commercialism. There are many alternative programs developing. I notice that our own Mission and Service Fund has an alternative giving program where you can purchase items for programs our United Church supports around the world and in Canada (www.giftswithvision.ca). Christmas time can also be a challenge for those who have had a loved one die over the year. Our Longest Night Service, December 21, seeks to offer some comfort and hope to those who find this season difficult.

However you celebrate this season, may you find ways to make meaning with you and your family to honour the love, joy, hope, and peace that is so integral to this time and all year. In closing, I offer another poem from a youth:

Advent is a time for quiet reflection

During these weeks, we ask God for blessings on our families and friends

Very soon, Christmas will come and we will celebrate Christ's birth in that chaos.

Everyone has this period to do good for others and remember what the season is truly about.

Nothing is more important than celebration and joy within ourselves and with others

Take a moment to rejoice during this month and always.

Advent Season at Sunset (In addition to our regular Sunday morning Services)

Community Christmas Celebration – Friday, November 25; see page 8

Christmas Quiet – Reflective retreat from the Christmas rush, 7 to 8 pm on Thursdays in December; see page 3

Choir Cantata – Sunday, December 18 @ 10:30 am

Longest Night Service – Wednesday, December 21 @ 7 pm

Christmas Eve Services – All Ages @ 4:30 pm and Communion @ 9 pm

Regular Services resume January 1, 2012 @ 10:30 am



The Road to Abundance:

Our Stewardship Campaign for 2012

Each year at this time, our church launches a stewardship campaign to invite gifts of time and talent, and to help us establish predictable and adequate financing for our many activities and our building. Without apology or awkwardness, our campaign shares the financial needs of our church and directly asks our community to consider giving a predictable sum for



each month of the year, summer included.

We begin our campaign by focusing on our progress on the journey of being a giving church.

- What are we giving and what more could we give?
- When we know God's generosity in so many ways, how can we not share what we have?

A package of information will be delivered to Sunset households in November. Please consider your answers to the above questions when making your pledge for 2012 to Sunset United Church. We invite you to view a visual display of our journey on the road of abundance that has been posted in the church.

Thank you from those leading the 2012 campaign: Marina Jeffery, Russell Mitchell-Walker, Kevin Perrey, Nick Belanger, George Peters, Dave Marshall, Don Wushke



Christmas Quiet - A Reflective retreat from the Christmas rush:

Each night will include reflections of readings with some silent meditation which could involve walking the labyrinth for those who wish.

December 1 – Walking Meditation with the Labyrinth as in ancient times

An opportunity to learn about this ancient tool of meditation and prayer and to walk a 7-circuit labyrinth. This Labyrinth will be taped down on the sanctuary floor and be available for all of the Advent, Christmas season.



December 8 – Meditation through visual images

An opportunity to explore meditation and spirituality through an artist's perspective.

December 15 – Meditation through Circle Dancing

Lorraine Walker of Moose Jaw will lead us in a circle dance or two.

December 22 – Reflective time with live harp music

Kelly Warden and friends will offer musical meditation to the strums of the harp.

From the Property Committee

The Ladies Fellowship has generously offered to pay for replacing the front doors leading into the sanctuary. The existing doors are beginning to rust badly on outside and are anything but energy efficient. The initial quote seemed rather high so other suppliers have been invited to come forward with prices. In addition, the Committee is looking at ways to reduce the costs, possibly by replacing the doors only in the existing framework. We should know the outcome of our findings in a couple of weeks.

On other fronts, the garden hoses have been put away and the riding mower parked for the winter. This past summer saw the Virginia Creeper transplants take hold and cover the ground and chain link fence on the west side. The trees and shrubs which were planted over the past few years flourished in the sun and rain, although so did the weeds in lawn which will need particular attention next summer. Until then our immediate concern is, however, dealing with the snow and ice once again.

-Keith Schneider



Christian Education Committee

We have had a great start to our fall programs this year. We were excited to have 25 children in Sunday School for our Kickoff Sunday! It was a great turnout for the 'tailgate BBQ' afterwards as well. There are 8 youth participating in the grade 4-6 Explorer program which meets every Thursday after school. The grade 6-8 TGIF program meets every other Friday with Russell leading and Karlee Michael and Jesse Gibson (a new young adult to our community) assisting and being mentored. Sunday School is going well with the new schedule involving all the parents out. Please remember to get your criminal record check to the office as soon as possible.

Our White Gift service will be Dec 11 with some youth and children performing a musical along with a few adults. This is directed by Corinne Groff and Brian Mitchell-Walker, with Shirley Hill accompanying on piano. New members for our chorus are welcome. Donations brought will be given to Rainbow Youth for their Christmas gathering. See list of suggested items elsewhere in this newsletter.

January will bring our annual Hot Diggity Dog lunch on the 15th, please plan to stay and enjoy some fellowship with those that share your birthday month. This will be Kathy's first Sunday back from her Sabbatical.

The youth groups will again be hosting a "Not Quite Shrove Tuesday" pancake supper on Thursday February 16 from 5-6:30pm. We have rescheduled the usual date due to the week off of school Feb 20-24. Proceeds will go to the Mission and Service Fund.

**Submitted by Shari Powers,
CE co-chair**

*Mark your calendar now
for all of the upcoming
Christian Education
Committee events!*



"Would Jesus Side with the Wall St. Protesters?" - Evan Robinson

The Sunset Men's group will be starting a discussion group in the "Let's Talk About It" series November 24. The topic that night will be "Would Jesus Side with the Wall Street Protesters?"

The purpose of the group is to discuss issues of importance to men of all ages with the aim of challenging and enlarging our Christian Worldview.

Starting again in January, please join us as we continue to explore issues of interest to men. Some of the upcoming topics include:

A Most Curious Hero- Steve Jobs and our culture's obsession with hero worship
The Value of Your Wife's criticism
The Christian Atheist
The Men in Christ's Life- Doubting Thomas, Peter and Matthew
When is it OK to tell the Doctor to pull the plug?
Can rich people get into heaven? (or can a Christian own a BMW?)
Is it OK to put your aging mother in "Shady Pines"?
Happiness and virtue- a life well-lived

A variety of interesting topics will be discussed at upcoming meetings of Sunset Men's Group

Sunset Men... "Let's Talk About It"



Trivia Night

The Fundraising Committee will be hosting a Trivia Night February 4, at 7pm. Form a team, (\$10/person/team) and put your brain to the test!! Challenge your friends from other congregations to form a team and compete with ours! Judged by a 'celebrity' panel. All ages welcome.

Watch the bulletin for further details.

SCHOOL'S OFF, CHURCH IS ON!



AN OPPORTUNITY FOR CHILDREN

A new fun with faith, day program for school age children on some of those Fridays off.

Advent Event: December 2, 9 – 3:30. Register at the office.

Volunteers needed for lunch and program assistance. Contact Russell if you are interested or able to help.



School's off, Church is on! – A great way for children to spend a day off school. Sign up for the Advent Event today!

White Gift Sunday

Sunday, December 11 is White Gift Sunday. This is an opportunity for us to bring personal care items, things for infants, children and youth, including items to help prepare for colder weather to be donated to Rainbow Youth Centre. They will use these items to make Christmas stocking/gift packages for families who attend their Christmas dinner December 21.

Your donation of the following **new items** is greatly appreciated:

Youth

- Deodorant (male & female)
- Shampoo (500-710 ml)
- Toothpaste(75 ml) & toothbrushes
- Toothbrush
- Sport socks (white-adult sizes)
- Mitts & Toques (adult size)

Infant

- Toques (infant/toddler) & mittens (infant/toddler)
- Socks (infant/toddler)
- Baby shampoo

Alternate Shopping Option:

Purchase a gift card from Superstore, Wal-Mart, or Zellers and let *Rainbow Elves* do the shopping.

Please contact Shari Powers (949-3791) or Russell if you have any questions.

Children

- Socks
- Toque
- Mitts
- Toothbrush
- Toothpaste (75ml)
- Shampoo (500-710ml)
- Books for reading
- Crayons
- Colouring books



The annual Rainbow Youth Christmas Dinner will be December 21. Volunteers are needed to help with a variety of areas. Shifts start at 4:00 p.m. If you are able to help, please sign up on the sheets on the Rainbow Youth Poster in the church, or talk to Russell.

What is White Gift Sunday...?

Each Advent we have a White Gift Sunday and bring gifts for the poor. But what is White Gift Sunday? Some say it all began about 1000 years ago in the mighty kingdom of Cathay – where their ruled a very rich and very powerful king called Kubla Khan.

Unlike many kings Kubla Khan was generous and wise. He treated the rich and the poor alike and was especially nice towards little children. It was a time of peace in the land because Kubla Khan ruled for the benefit of all his people and not just the rich and powerful. One year his subjects decided to

hold a great birthday party for him to honour him as their King. They had held great birthday parties for Kubla Khan before, because he was well loved, but this particular year they decided to do it differently. They wanted to make him especially glad. They knew that he treated all his people the same - so they decided to show no difference in the gifts that he gave him - and have every gift that was given wrapped in white so that they would look all the same.

The people brought their white gifts to Kubla Khan on his birthday.

Some were only able to bring a handful of rice - but it was wrapped in white. Others were able to bring beautiful ivory and precious jewels, but these too were wrapped in white. All the gifts looked the same and when the king unwrapped them he treated them all the same - because he knew that each gift was given with the same degree of love and devotion as the next gift. And in a white book, people who did not have any gifts to offer, could offer their time or talent to serve the king, by entering their name in that book.

Many years later, in 1903 in the house of the Methodist minister the family had just returned from a Christmas pageant that included a gift exchange. Two of his



daughters were arguing about the differing gifts they got. One got peanuts, the other a nice doll. The girl who got peanuts, knew it came from a girl whose family had very little money. They recognized the unfairness of the gift exchange, and realized that there are others who don't have much money and could benefit from receiving gifts. Together with their mother, they decided to suggest to the church to have a gift collection next year, instead, and give the gifts to those in need. They had just heard about the story of Kubla Khan and thought it would be good if all the gifts were wrapped in white to look the same.



Each Advent we give our white gifts to God - we do what the subjects of Kubla Khan did. We honour the birth of Jesus - by giving what we can - knowing that like Kubla Khan we will use our gifts to help other people - no matter who they are - knowing that God wants us to treat everyone of us alike with love and devotion.

Sunset United Church Christmas Tea & Bake Sale

Featuring dainty trays for sale-

just in time for all of your

Christmas entertaining!

Date: December 10th

Time: 10 am - 1 pm

Donations of baking & crafts will be gratefully accepted



FAMILY MINISTRY

Parents, Do you wonder how to nurture children's faith?

Another opportunity for children and parents to come together

Explore issues of faith and learn ways to share our faith at home.

Saturday February 18, 5:00 - 7:00 pm

Learning about Lent

Pot-luck supper at 5pm

followed by program.

Families and their children ages 3-grade 6 are welcome. Youth are also

welcome to come and participate or assist.

Let Russell know if you can attend or if you are interested in helping.

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Thanks to Steve Doyal (See Matthew 4:1-11) 03-31-2005
INTO BREAD? ... IF YOU'RE GOING TO TEMPT IN THIS DAY AND AGE YOU CAN'T GO ALL CARB ON PEOPLE FYI

The Affirming Ministry Working Circle

The Affirming Ministry Working Circle is initiating the ***Sunset Perspectives Poster Project***. Our hope is that this project will invite reflection and conversation about who we are as an Affirming Ministry. The idea is to widen our perspectives using this visual art project. Anyone in the congregation can submit an idea, and we are hoping that every committee in the church will submit a poster representing their committee. We would like you to think of a word that represents your work, such as Worship, or Education, and then think of images for that word and how diverse those may be depending on your perspective. Try to think as if you are a member of a different culture or gender or ability and what images that word would make you think of. Alternatively, you may first think of an image that represents your work, and think of some different words that could go with that, depending on what diversity group you were from.

The goal of this project is to increase our understanding of being in a diverse community, with an emphasis on broadening our perspectives. We plan on displaying the posters you come up with in the church through 2012 so please look for them and take the opportunity to shift perspectives.

We'd love to talk with you more about this. We are having our next AMWC meeting on November 28th @ 7pm and members of each committee or anyone who wants to know more is welcome to join us. If it would be easier for us to attend one of your committee meetings to explain the project, please contact any of us and let us know when we can attend.

We are looking forward to what everyone comes up with!

AMWC – Kelly Warden, Brian Mitchell-Walker, Hilary Wallin, Kathy Platt, Karen Wotherspoon, Peter Wotherspoon, Dave Warden, and Trina Hodgson

Sunset Ladies Fellowship will hold their Annual Christmas Potluck, November 28 at 5:30 p.m. at the Church. Our entertainment is Credence. Our Christmas Offering this year will go to the Indian Leadership Fund.

If you have any questions contact Jessie at 586-0211 or Joan at 586-5737.

Community Christmas Celebration



*A simple gathering as our ancestors have done
Celebrating community and having some fun*

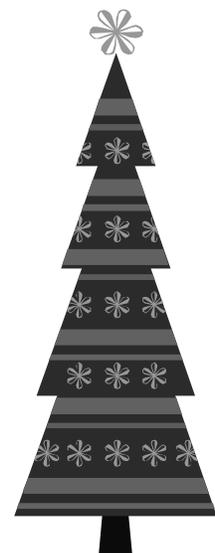
With Cider, Crafts, Sleigh ride and song

No IPod, computer only sing along.

You are invited: Friday, November 25
6:30 pm to 8ish
Cost: Family \$20, Single \$10, Youth \$5

Plus a toque, pair of mitts or socks to decorate our Community Christmas Tree with these donations going to the Rainbow Youth Centre in the spirit of the season.

Spread the word, see your there!



A letter from Africa: November 17, 2011

Greetings from Marsabit, Kenya! I have been here in Kenya for just over two weeks, but it feels like already a year's worth of stories and pictures have been stored in my heart and soul. I continue to be deeply touched by the work of Sauti Moja Marsabit. They are doing their best to make a difference that will be sustained – not to give food just for today, but to find ways that the women and children who live in the muck of intense poverty might begin to climb their way towards a healthier life for their families. Before I left Canada, Sunset United did a fund-raiser towards the cost of purchasing 4 camels – we raised just over \$2,000. When Sauti Moja first started with their livestock program, they supplied 8 camels to a small, isolated Rendille community not far from the Ethiopia border. There was a disease that came across the border, which killed 4 of those camels. So, with this money that we raised, Sauti Moja is finally going to be able to replace those 4 camels – the village has been waiting a long time, so our donation comes as a huge support to them. Sauti Moja is in the process now of researching where they will be able to get the camels at the best price – they hope to purchase and deliver them in the next month or two – perhaps a Christmas surprise for the village! The camels will provide milk for many households, helping to sustain and support the health of families – THANK YOU! As I mentioned in my blog, the rains have made the roads virtually impassable, so we won't be able to go and visit the village where our camels will reside, but here is a picture of a camel being milked in Logologo – just so you know I really am here, and I really am seeing camels!



As I meet some of the widows and child mothers here, Tim often introduces me as representing the Canadian donors who are providing them with the livestock, or who are paying school fees for the children to continue in Secondary School. I am extremely aware of what a privilege and an honor it is for me to be here – just as I am sending home the pictures of the people your money is supporting, the people here are seeing my face as representing the generosity of people who live across the ocean from them. To be honest, there are times I feel the weight of that as well. I wrestle with those questions that have no answers – like how is it that I was born in Canada, into an educated family who have always had steady employment, and who encouraged me to become educated so that I have never had to deal with intense hunger or poverty? And how is it that Bokayo, one of the widows I met, was born in Africa into a family who had no education and no steady income, so that she herself never attended school at all, and yet she is now widowed and struggling to support and feed her 7 children on her own? When I asked Bokayo what it is that gives her the encouragement to keep going, she said that she never expected to be still alive after this last drought. Seeing the rains come so that there is now water nearby, and then hearing from Sauti Moja that sometime soon she might even get a donkey to



help her carry more water than she has ever been able to do before, is a clear sign to her that God will look after even someone like her. If she has the donkey when the rains are done and the next dry season starts, she won't be so afraid for how she will look after her children. Her faith in God is the only thing that keeps her going – she knows that she is here only through the grace of God. Or as another woman today said to us: “The God of the poor is not asleep.”

I know that there are many, many ways that people share their wealth. I also know that I don't share these stories and pictures to inspire guilt – although it is hard not to feel guilt at the clear image of disparity all around us. We don't have to look far to see that disparity, even within our own city. My hope is that as hard as it is to hear some of these stories, that underneath the obvious poverty, you will also see the incredible strength of a people who will not give up – who are determined to build a better world for their own people. I am continually inspired and encouraged by their generosity of spirit, and their gratitude that I have promised that the Canadians that I know will never forget them – that we will continue to be connected through prayer – that we will carry each other in our hearts and God will keep us connected.

If you are able and/or willing to offer any financial assistance to the work of Sauti Moja, I encourage you to go to their website: www.sautimoja.org. Once on their website, click “home” and it will take you to the page where they have some suggestions of ways to make Christmas donations – for the purchase of goats, donkeys, or camels, or for supporting a child mother to attend school for a year. While it is lovely to imagine that Sauti Moja will receive a flood of donations from Canada, I know that people can only spread their income so far. Please know that whatever you can give will be deeply appreciated – and if you have other charities that you are supporting, please know that it all contributes towards building the kind of world that God imagines for us. I am in the process of talking with Tim about which of the child mothers my own family will be able to support – I look forward to introducing her to you through pictures once I return. If you are interested in supporting a child mother, or a widow, please be in touch with Sauti Moja and they will begin the process of matching you up with someone.

In the meantime – check out my blog for more pictures. And Merry Christmas to us all!! See you when I return to work on January 10th!

Blessed be,

Kathy

