

“Called to be Servants of Christ in Our Community”

Niagara United Mennonite Church

December 25th, 2017

~ *Christmas Day Celebration* ~

Worship Service – 10:45 a.m.

Gathering	Kathy Rempel
Call to Worship & Pastoral Prayer	Linda Friesen
Worship in Song	Pick-up Choir
Offering	

Offering Focus – see financial section

Proclamation	
Scripture Reading	Udo Woelke
“Who is this Jesus?”	John Tiessen
Sending	John Tiessen

* * * * *

The spell-check feature on my Microsoft Word program made an incorrect correction on a Christmas greeting I had written that actually ended up being quite instructive. It changed the title to the familiar Christmas song from ‘Away in a Manger’ to ‘A way in a Manger.’ This ‘correction’ helps us to understand that the real miracle of Christmas is found not only in realizing that Jesus came, but in understanding why He came. Jesus’ entrance into human history is a clear declaration that God has initiated *a way* for us to be reconnected to Him in loving relationship.

The Bible has this to say about God’s plan for Jesus’ coming into the world

– This is how God showed his love for us: God sent his only Son into the world so we might live through him. ¹⁰This is the kind of love we are talking about—not that we once upon a time loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to clear away our sins and the damage they’ve done to our relationship with God. (1 John 4:9-10 The Message)

Through the wonder of God’s love as displayed in the manger there is *a way* for you and me to enjoy the fullness of life God has planned. It is by embracing the purpose of Jesus’ coming; to understand that the reason He entered a manger was to offer Himself as the One who would make a way to experience the fullness of God’s grace and peace. Jesus declared the He is not just a way but *the way* to the Father. No one can go to the Father without Him. My Christmas wish to you is that this Way, the promised presence of Jesus, would be your source of comfort and direction throughout this blessed season and the coming year.

- Pastor David Lewis

Merry Christmas to our NUMC family from the Rauwerdas!

The holiday season has me in a very contemplative headspace as I reflect on all that this past year has held for us: the growth of Mark's company and recognition of his success as a recipient of Niagara's Top 40 Under Forty Business Achievement Award; the fulfilment of my lifelong dream to become a teacher; a trip to France in March; the planning of our upcoming journey abroad; and a short stint working in the restaurant industry, which, through God's incredible timing, led me here, to the role of Youth and Education Director.

Though my time has been short, I've felt so grateful for the learning I've experienced as I have sought to serve this community with integrity and intentionality. I've discovered a deep love for youth, become better acquainted with many of you, and been showered with the same love and support that I've known throughout my lifetime in this community.

That love and support has been especially evident to me throughout this Fall as we have lived through the painful yet beautiful process of releasing our Grandpa, John Harder. With our focus less on rituals and more on relationships this year, I've felt a heightened sense of gratitude for the people who surround me, and a sharper focus on the incredible significance of Christmas. The traditions, gifts, decorations, and foods are all beautiful, but they pale in comparison to the comfort of knowing that Grandpa is home to celebrate the birth of his Saviour in His presence, as well as the love of God that fills and surrounds us here on earth.

My hope for each of us is that we experience the significance of this season in a fresh and invigorating way; that we come a little closer to understanding just how wholly and completely we are loved and held by God; and that we trust in that love to carry us through not only the Christmas season but our whole lifetime here on earth.

Merriest of Christmases and Happiest of New Years to each of you.
With love,
Ellery (& Mark too)



Reconnecting with the congregation of my childhood just in time for the Christmas celebrations has been a wonderful treat for me. As I was preparing table centre pieces for the Adventsfeier Dec. 3rd, I had opportunity to explore nooks and corners of the building I hadn't seen in decades, in search of decorative items. Singing those German Christmas songs felt like revisiting a previous life. When the dishwasher broke down and the clean-up team had to wash all the coffee cups and saucers by hand, I recalled those dish washing marathons with the youth group after the turkey supper — except now we were all just a little older! And what a special thrill to join the ranks in the choir loft for the Candlelight Service again — memories of real candles with ho, dripping wax, blue choir gowns with starched white collars, and a large real tree draped with silver tinsel!

Much has changed. Children have grown up and taken over the reins; old friends are sporting a bit of grey and showing off pictures of grandchildren on their smartphones; Omas and Opas have passed on; many new faces populate the pews; new songs have transformed the repertoire; and traditions have been tailored to meet the needs of a growing, changing faith community. And this is good.

Much has also remained the same: the joy of singing and making music together; the value of instilling in our children and youth the significance of a God who loves and came to save us all; the commitment to support and care for the elderly, the grieving, and those in need; the passion to continue to grow and build the church as a place of refuge and hope for our families, friends and neighbours.

Memories. Traditions. Values. Change. All are felt so keenly at the Christmas festival that concludes each passing year. The wonderful story of Christ's birth fills our hearts each time we hear it, as both profoundly new and reassuringly familiar. As you remember the experiences of the past, celebrate the blessings and navigate the challenges of the present, and take the next steps forward into the future, may you know the peace and joy of our Immanuel — God with us!

Gesegnete Weihnachten!
Blessed Christmas!

~ Associate Pastor: German Worship Renate Dau Klaassen

Christmas Blessings to Niagara United Mennonite Church Community

As I pause to reflect on this past year, I recognize how different the view surrounding me is this Christmas season.

It's been another year of juggling the staffing team. In saying goodbye to Pastor Steve and his family this past summer as they followed God's call into greater leadership, it meant an end to the familiar and stable presence in this journey of transition. Steve of course represented much more than that to us all; he was a treasure trove of wisdom, offered great leadership, and mentorship for those who sought it out, and was a humble, Christ-following, encouraging friend. His leaving meant that I am now the employee on staff with the most years of service here at NUMC. How quickly these things can change!! Though we've also welcomed others aboard-Ellery and Renate. Sadly, of course Ellery's just on her way out, but it's been such a pleasure to work with her these last few months.

Throughout my time here, I have always also been sharing my working time between my role here and other commitments. As an update, I have recently left my other ministry job and no longer work in another church.

On the home front, I've already shared my most exciting news of the year with you, my engagement! Now I'll take the opportunity to heartfully thank you for the incredibly warm way you responded to that news! Alan & I have both so appreciated the ways many of you have gone out of your way to stop in to congratulate me, or sent an email to us to share in our joy. This overwhelming sense of church family has been so precious to me and we have been so blessed by your loving expressions of support. I'm also so thrilled with the welcome reception he's received, mostly credited to the Candlelight Choir, but also in other congregational settings, when he has participated in events. It is such a testament to the warmth that exists here. I'm so proud to be able to share you with him!

As much as the coworkers, workplaces, or new fiancé in my life change around me, what doesn't change is what I observe in my role here at church. I see the expressions of God here in our building every single day. I see his followers seeking to build his Kingdom, to serve one another, to teach children to pray, and to offer aid where there are needs. Do we always get it right? No! Let's not jump ahead (the 98 days) to Easter just yet! Right now, let us celebrate in the fact that our Lord God loved us enough to enter our world in human form, a world full of sin, setting his glory aside- to offer a way for God and sinners to be reconciled. He is born so that we no more may die, born to raise us from the earth, and born to give us all a second birth. "Glory to the newborn King!!"

May this Christmas be one of great joy for you as you perhaps experience the message of Christmas in a new way, and may you all experience the peace of Christ today and through the coming year! - April Michon

It's hard to believe another year has passed so quickly. Time seems to fly by so quickly the older we get! It is seen in our own family as we now have two children in University and our third starting high school next year. Anita and I have grown so close with so many of you and feel are truly our family! We are truly blessed to have experienced so many cherished memories with you. Nothing gives us more joy than to see you come by the Church while we are working. A handshake here, a hug there and always a parting smile. That makes are job so worthwhile. We would like to wish you all a Blessed Christmas! May the Lord fill your hearts this Christmas Season with love and joy for all!

Blessings ,
Jeff and Anita

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE (December 25th – December 31st)

Wednesday: 2:00 pm Private Family Gathering

Sunday, December 31st

9:45 am Choir Practice

10:45 am Worship Service – Message by Pastoral David Lewis

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

Thank you for all your generous donations! God brings us together as a church community in such a way that each of us has something unique to contribute. By supporting our church financially, we are encouraged to grow in our faith, discover our gifts and share them with our community. We need approximately \$70,000 (\$23,333 per week), as of December 23rd, by the end of December to meet our budget of \$410,000. Please be generous so that we can meet all our obligations. Donations can be made conveniently online, by debit, by direct bank or internet transfer, and of course by cash or cheque.

Online Filming Privacy Notice – Our church services are recorded for streaming 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.