

Deseronto-Napanee Pastoral Charge

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"In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree"

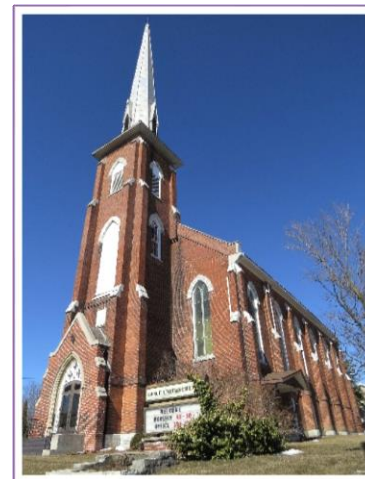
Some years ago, when I was a fairly new minister, the youth group at my church decided to present the nativity story at a community event. The presentation of the birth of Christ was to take place outside in the evening, where there would also be caroling, hot chocolate, and other festive activities. I would be the one to read the story from the gospels of Luke and Matthew, while the others played the parts of Mary and Joseph, shepherds, angels and wise men.

That evening there was a light snow falling as we excitedly set out with our costumes and props. We got to the chosen location, and were just getting ready to get started when the generator died. The community group had set up a generator, so that there would be enough lights to see, and give power for the microphone. However, they had neglected to make sure there was enough fuel in the generator. The man in charge of the generator said, "Don't worry. It'll only take me a few minutes to get this thing gassed up," and off he drove in his pick-up.

We waited impatiently for him to return. It was dark, the snow was coming down harder every minute, and we were quickly getting colder and wetter and unhappier. The youth group leader said to me, "Elaine, you must know this story off by heart – you don't need to read it. Why don't we just go ahead, and you can tell the story, and a few people have their flashlights. We'll just do the best we can."

I gulped. Yes, I know the nativity story, but do I have it memorized? I did not feel at all confident that I could say these beautiful words off by heart, so I declined.

We just waited in the cold and snow until Mr. Generator got back, and then we did the presentation. By then, we were



Upcoming Events

December 19th

Advent Four – Please join us for a taste of **Christmas Through the Centuries**. Steven Lindsay-Maracle and members of our choirs have put together a lovely worship service based on Christmas carols and some of the history behind them. It is bound to be a great time!

December 24th

Christmas Eve Worship Service – Please join us in celebration and anticipation beginning at 7:00 p.m. We will be participating in the Sacrament of Holy Communion utilizing pre-portioned packages.

December 26th

We will be hosting our regularly scheduled worship service beginning at 10:30 a.m.

not nearly as enthusiastic as we would have been 15 minutes earlier.

Since that night, I have tested myself again and again to see if I really do have the story memorized. I mostly do, at least the Luke verses. I get tangled up a little, partly because of the different Bible translations which I use at various times. But whatever translation you have in front of you, the old, old story still resonates with beauty and with wonder. It is our story, our miracle story. To me, this story is Christmas.

“In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ²(This was the first census that took place while^[a] Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³And everyone went to their own town to register.

⁴So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. ⁶While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

⁸And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.

⁹An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

¹³Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

¹⁴“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

¹⁵When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

¹⁶So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

Rev. Elaine



Upcoming Events

January 2nd

Membership Sunday – Please join us as we officially welcome all Deseronto United Church members that wish to join Grace United Church.

January 22nd

Please join us for an afternoon concert of **Flamenco Music** featuring **Richard and Marta Moir** beginning at 3:00 p.m. Tickets are \$10 each, and are available by calling the office.

January 26th

Grace Board Meeting beginning at 7:00 p.m. in the Hall.

February 13th

Grace U. C. Annual General Meeting immediately following our worship service. Everyone is strongly encouraged to attend.

Changes for 2022

As many of you know, Deseronto United Church closed the doors to their beloved building on the corner of Fourth and Thomas Streets at the end of October 2020. Since then, the members of the congregation have been regularly attending worship at Grace United Church. After many long, hard conversations, the Board and members of Deseronto United Church have made the difficult decision to officially close and amalgamate with Grace United.

"What does this mean?" you may ask. It means that we are no longer a 2-Point Pastoral Charge, and you will see our name change from "Deseronto-Napanee Pastoral Charge" to "Grace United Church". Pretty much everything else will remain the same.

All Deseronto United Church records will remain at Grace, where they will be accessible when needed. However, after December 31, 2021, nothing else can be recorded in the registers.

Dianna Stuart, Leslie Sweet, and Bert and Sharon Needham are working together to sort out the financial component, and issue envelopes to those that would like them.

Rev. Elaine, Leslie, and members of the Worship, Music, and Sacraments Committee are working on a special Membership Service on January 2nd to welcome all of the Deseronto folks that wish to become members of Grace. If you are a Deseronto member, and have not heard from Rev. Elaine and would like to become a member at Grace, please contact the office. We strongly encourage all Grace members that are able to attend to join us, as we re-welcome our long-time friends.

May we continue to grow, learn, and flourish together as we navigate this path as one.

Financial News

First, I want to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We had another challenging year dealing with the Covid 19 pandemic. I also want to send a huge thank you to everyone for their continued financial support of Grace Church.

Our financial situation at the end of November is better that it has been for several years. At the end of November our deficit is \$-951.80. How is this possible, you ask? Well, we owe a big thank you to our treasurer, Bert Needham, who kept on top of the government wage subsidies that were made available by the federal government. Bert has applied and received many subsidies to date, which has allowed us to keep our staff on the payroll throughout this pandemic. We also owe a big than you to YOU, the congregation for making sure we still get your contributions, even though we were not always having regular Sunday Services. Some of you sent in cheques, some did on-line e-transfers, some used or joined P.A.R. (pre-authorized remittance) and some dropped off their donations. Whatever means you used, we are truly grateful!



Fall Colours Tour

On Tuesday, October 19th a crew of Deseronto and Grace U. C. members (with a few brave additions) climbed onto a DeNure bus to take a cruise north to Denbigh, west on Highway 28 to Hardwood Lake, then meandering southwest to highway 62, and on home again, all the while checking out the fall foliage, learning some interesting local history and geography, and getting to know more about one another. Along the way, the crew stopped at Maplehaus Banquet Hall for lunch, and even convinced the driver to take a small detour to see one of the churches that Rev. Elaine used to be involved with.

A BIG thank you to Lois Sexsmith and Debbie Morgan from Maritime Travel for organizing this event! And thank you to Rev. Elaine for being our tour guide! Everyone seemed to have a great time!



Looking ahead to 2022, we will be facing some new challenges. We were very sorry to see the closure of Deseronto Church, but we are very happy that they have decided to join with Grace Church in Napanee. As of January 1st we will be one congregation. This means we will receive the offering from the Deseronto folks who choose to join us, however, will not have the commitment we had in our previous arrangement. As well, the government wage subsidies will not be available in 2022. All this to say that we have challenges ahead. As 2022 progresses we will keep the congregation informed of our financial situation.

Once again, THANK YOU for your support, both financially and in all the other ways you have helped support this church, and one another, throughout this past couple of difficult years.

Submitted by
Ron Murray (Chair, Finance and Stewardship)

New Members

In August, while our worship services were still online only, Rev. Elaine and our small crew represented Grace as we officially welcomed Siobhan Flynn into our congregation. Siobhan has attended Grace, as well as Deseronto, for a number of years. She is VERY active within our music department, and has stepped into the role of Chair of our Worship, Music, and Sacraments Committee.

On Sunday, October 17th Grace welcomed two new members to our congregation, Ernest Rae and Annette Long.

Ernest Rae began attending Grace in the fall of 2020. He had recently moved to our area, and had previously attended Grace United in Gananoque, On. Ernest has quickly become an eager and enthusiastic member of our congregation jumping in to help on a number of endeavours.

Annette Long has attended Grace on *many* occasions over the years with her grandfather, Ross Long. Annette previously attended Edith Rankin Memorial United Church in Kingston. In December 2020, Annette and her partner, Brad, chose to have their son, Samuel, baptized with us.

Welcome to ALL of you!! We are SO glad that you chose to join our family! We look forward to many years together getting to know one another and growing in faith.



Handbells

Over the last 20+ years, Grace has been blessed to have beautiful handbells on loan from Picton United Church in Picton, On. With the bells, our handbell choir has travelled around Southeastern Ontario playing for many different churches and community events while having a lot of fun and laughs.

Due to Covid, though, our choir has not been meeting to practice. However, we are hoping to begin again in the new year.

If you or someone you may know might be interested in learning to play or if you have already been a member and would like to return, please contact Jean Bentley at 613-290-9175.

Broadview Subscriptions

It is time to renew our Broadview Magazine subscriptions, the magazine put out by the United Church of Canada. The cost is \$25 for 7 issues. Cheques can be made out to "Broadview Magazine", place in an envelope marked "Broadview", and left on the collection plate or in the mailbox outside.

"The Chosen"

A small group of interested people has been meeting weekly this fall to watch episodes of a new series on the life of Jesus, called, "The Chosen". This series presents the story of Jesus in a way that is unlike any I have seen before. While staying true to the way things are written in the gospels, the producers use imagination to fill in blanks, flesh out the characters of the disciples, and make connections between stories that are not obviously connected in the Bible. Along with Jesus, the characters who we see the most are Nicodemus, Mary Magdalene, Peter, and Matthew.

Each week, after we view one episode, we have a time of conversation. We have been having some meaningful and thought-provoking discussions, and I am so grateful for how people have been willing to share their own spiritual journeys with the group.

"The Chosen" can be viewed with our group on Thursday evenings beginning at 6:30 p.m. in the Board Room. We will begin Season 2 again in the new year when it is advisable to do so. It can also be viewed by anyone on whatever device you may have, and with a good internet connection. It's worthwhile checking out!

Rev. Elaine

Thank You

We are still in the time of Covid. I am rather tired of it, as I expect everybody is, but we continue as best as we can.

Thank you to all of you for keeping the faith.

Thank you for getting properly vaccinated.

Thank you for coming to in-person worship, even if it is not quite the way we usually do things.

Thank you for participating in worship from your homes, thanks to YouTube and Cogeco. Thank you to our tech team for making sure the worship services are taped and distributed.

Thank you to all who do the behind-the-scenes work, looking after the building maintenance and cleaning and repairs.

Thank you for supporting the ministry here with donations and offerings.

Thank you for your generous donations of clothing and food to help out needy people in our community and in other communities.

Thank you for supporting our ministry with prayer.

It is a privilege to minister among you.

Rev. Elaine



Bulletin and Newsletter Sponsorship

If you would like to sponsor our weekly bulletin or quarterly newsletter in memory or in honour of a loved one, please contact Leslie. We often have special bulletin covers for events in our church calendar that you may wish to sponsor (booklet style) or you may sponsor one of our regular weekly bulletins (brochure style) that could be printed in colour. The cost of the weekly bulletin sponsorship is \$10.00, and goes towards the special covers or the cost of printing.

As for the newsletter, we are capable of placing several names, thus the cost of sponsorship is \$20.00. Funds from this go towards the cost of printing the hardcopies and postage.

Important Announcement

Due to Covid and a delay in production, our 2022 offering envelopes will be delayed. Post Envelopes states that we will receive them in January. Sharon and Leslie are working on a temporary solution, and will keep you informed as we go.

Fundraising

Nate and Thomas

On October 16th, we hosted Nate Parady and Thomas Mastin in an afternoon concert of contemporary gospel as well as pop music. They played music by Cold Play, Duran Duran, and U2, as well as their own originals. Approximately 35 people attended the show. Thank you to everyone that came out, and supported these up-and-comers!



Mary's Merry Minstrels

Thank you to everyone that joined us for our afternoon concert on November 20th with Mary Kennedy and her Merry Minstrels. It was definitely a toe-tapping good time when they brought their show, "Fiddle Night in Canada". Over 50 people attended with over \$500 being raised.



Purdy's Chocolate Fundraiser

T'was two months before Christmas and all through the church,
The congregation pulled together to help CE who were in a lurch.
Purdy's Chocolates were offering a promotion
Of 25% profit to those who took motion.
Everyone partook in this great offer
To help CE fill up their coffers.

Rivers raged and in BC, the news was not good.
The congregation prayed for their livelihood.
With faith in Jesus' words, all arrived safe.
The congregation unpacked their goods
In the basement at Grace.

With Jesus' help by listening to our prayers
The Christian Education Committee
Distributed their wares.
In January Purdy's will send us money
Of \$1200 to help us study.

Thank you Lord Jesus for your blessings

Submitted by
Dominique VanderLinden, Christian Education Committee

Poinsettias

Thank you to everyone that supported our Poinsettia Fundraiser. As always, your support is truly appreciated.

Also, fifty poinsettias were donated by the Men's Group, Christian Education, and Pastoral Care for our friends that are unable to be with us in person whether it be because our elevator is out of service or they are not physically able to make it to worship. Our wonderful volunteers (Fred Newton, Beth McKinney, Rodney Rogalsky, Leslie, and Rev. Elaine) delivered the plants, and received many smiling faces and deep gratefulness.

Flamenco Concert

Break out of your wintry slumber to join us on Saturday, January 22nd for a hot afternoon concert featuring Flamenco music beginning at 3:00 p.m. The talented duo that will be gracing our stage is Richard and Marta Moir from Morrisburg, On. They have been featured in festivals around world, and come with rave reviews. Check them out on YouTube! Between Richard's guitar playing and Marta's singing, they are bound to knock your socks off! Tickets are \$10 each, and are available by contacting the office. They will definitely bring some spice to a cold winter's day!