

Christmas 2019

THE  *BRITANNIA UNITED CHURCH*
Britannian

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Editorial

Christmas present

This is my 35th Christmas at Britannia. Christmas here is a mixture of the old and the new: the past and the present. Some things have stayed, like the pot luck or the White Gift service. On the other hand we have changed and adapted to keep “Christmas present” by adding the Blue Christmas service, adding or changing Christmas Eve services; even changing the Pot Luck (gasp!). Reverend Jim’s story about Shawn’s birth is a timely reminder about the currency of Christmas. It is not just a two thousand year old historical event on another continent: it is relevant in the present time and place. That’s something to keep in mind while you shop for your Christmas presents.

Wishing you many Christmas “present”s

Peter Bain
Editor

Minister's Message

December 24, 1989 was a Sunday. I had four services planned that day; the two morning services in Munster and Ashton, followed by the two evening services. It promised to be a busy day, but little did I know just how special it would be!

Val was expecting our third child, and we had been given the due date of December 24th. When she first heard the news, she said, "Don't tell me that! My husband is a minister." To which the doctor replied, "Don't feel bad. I'm Santa Claus!" We weren't too concerned about the due date. The first two children were each one week overdue, so we figured that we would get through Christmas, have the baby and be home for New Years. As it turned out, this baby would be the only one of the four who arrived on time.

We got through the morning services, which were both planned as hymn sings. The mood was joyful and festive and the churches were both filled with music and good cheer. The first of the evening services was at 7:30pm in Ashton. It was lovely and meaningful; much quieter than the morning service as we read the story of Christ's birth. We ended the service with a round of "We Wish You a Merry Christmas" and as we started to sing it "one more time" one of my congregation members made her way up the aisle to tell me that Val was in labour in the back room.

I made my way through the crowd and found out that her contractions were two minutes apart. This wasn't unusual, as they had been close together with the other two, but when I asked her how they felt, I figured I had about an hour to get her to the hospital. Val actually tried to convince me to go to Munster, feeling bad that they might not have me for Christmas Eve! But I had planned ahead. The service was one that could be led by my Lay Worship Leader, so a quick call was made to Dori, we drove Aunti Ruth home with Jason and Jaclyn, and off we went to the Ottawa Civic Hospital. We arrived at 9:30 and Shawn Harrison Baldwin was born at 10:27pm. Had we gone to Munster, we would have had the best manger scene ever, but we were quite grateful to be in a hospital room with our doctor who took time out from being Santa to make this very special delivery.

There is no question that expecting a baby on Christmas Eve had a very profound effect on our experience of Advent and Christmas that year. As we heard the story about the angel appearing to Mary, to tell her that she was with child, Val could feel our own child moving in her womb. And as we read about the journey to Bethlehem, the search for a safe place to stay the night, and the birth of God's son in a manger filled with hay, we had our own hopes and fears about what this birth would bring.

Val often speaks about being at the hospital after I had gone home to be with the other children. It was quiet and dark, as it was late at night. And as she nursed her newborn child and thought about the wonder of his birth, she couldn't help but think of Mary on that wondrous night. For her whole life, she had been taken to

church every Sunday and twice on Christmas Eve; first to City View United Church where we were both baptized, and then to St. Andrew's on Wellington for the midnight mass. The services had always been wondrous and glorious and rich in sight and sound, but this night in a hospital room with her newborn child the story had become profoundly real. It was as though the story had come to earth in human form.

Sometimes in the hustle and bustle, the pomp and ceremony, the planning and baking and shopping and wrapping and tinsel and lights and everything else that goes into Christmas, we forget that the story was real. A real baby was born to a real mother in a real stable in Bethlehem. It wasn't all gold and silver and shiny and new, with a covering of fresh-fallen snow. It was a hot and dusty road. The stable smelled of animals and straw. It was a simple, humble place, and this is where God's son – King of Kings and Lord of Lords – lay in a manger full of hay.

I think that through the centuries, in the church's attempt to elevate the Christmas story to a godly level, we have forgotten that God chose Christmas to enter into the human world, on our level. In the infant Christ, God chose to be vulnerable with us. In the suffering Christ, God chose to share our pain. In the life of Christ, God chose to appear to us in a way that was physical and real, and all of Christ's teachings point to God wanting us to share the Good News in ways that are present, and physical and real, with each other. Through us, the love of God continues to be made manifest on this earth in human form.

Christmastime is wonderful and joyous and pomp and ceremony and planning and baking and shopping and wrapping and tinsel and lights and everything else that goes into our celebrations, but the true meaning of Christmas is very real. It is about God loving the world so much as to send the Son into the world, with a message of salvation. It is a message of acceptance and forgiveness and grace; the epitome of peace on earth.

And so the true meaning of Christmas is found in hospital rooms, and shelters. It is found in White Gifts and food hampers and mitten trees. It is found in meals that are shared and gifts that are wrapped with the greatest of care. It is found in the thought behind the purchase, in the love that goes into something handmade, in words of kindness, and even in the silences we share. It is in these moments that the light shines, that the glory of God is experienced, and the presence of Christ is real.

From our house to yours, we wish you a very merry, and a very real Christmas. May you experience the presence of Christ in ways that you could not imagine, and may you share the presence of Christ with everyone you meet.

Rev. Jim

Community Events

Ottawa New Horizons Band

Jazz Band Concert Featuring: Jumping Jazz Band, Downtown Jazz Band, and Two Beats Ahead Jazz Band Featuring Don Cullen and JP Lafleur. Friday December 13, 7 to 8:30 pm at Brookfield High School, 824 Brookfield St., with refreshments.

BCCB - Barrhaven Community Concert Band

Tis the Season Featuring Don Cullen, JP Lafleur, MaryLou Hulan and Minnie Ang. 3:30 pm on Sunday December 15 at the Ottawa Torah Centre, 111 Lamplighters Dr, Nepean, Barrhaven. Admission \$10, age 10 and under free.

For more information on the above concerts contact Don Cullen at 613-726-1863

Nine Lessons and Carols

Ashton United Church is hosting an evening of Nine Lessons and Carols to prepare us for the Christmas season. Everyone is welcome; this event is free and no registration required.

4:00 pm - 5:00 pm on December 16 at Ashton United Church, Ashton Station Rd, Beckwith, ON [Google Map](#)

Come Sing Noel!

Come hear local Church Choirs sing Christmas music! Admission is free; refreshments will be provided. Freewill donations for the Barrhaven Food Bank will be gratefully received. 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm on Sunday December 8 at [Barrhaven United Church](#), 3013 Jockvale Road.



Congregation News

We welcome Levi Lake Baldwin, born October 1 2019 to Jason and Caroline Baldwin and grandparents Rev. Jim and Valerie Baldwin.

Cookie walk

Glen Cairn United Church Is Holding its 28th Annual Christmas Cookie Walk Craft Fair and Silent Auction on Saturday, December 7, 2019 From 9 Am To Noon At 140 Abbeyhill Drive, Kanata . For More Information, Contact the Church Office at 613-836-4756 or Office@Gcuc.Ca

Carols, Candles, and Cookies

Please Join Us for a Fun Christmas Sing-Along! Special Guests – Kanata United Church’s Sounds of Joy and Intermediate Choir. Christmas Cookies To Follow! Fun for all Ages! Free! Contact the KUC Office for More Information (Office@Kuc.Ca).

6:00 pm - 8:00 pm, Sunday December 1 at [Kanata United Church](#), 33 Leacock Dr. Kanata.

Just Gifts Fair Trade and Local Products Christmas Market

Just Gifts is a Christmas market with a difference, offering Fair Trade and local products, as well as a coffeehouse and entertainment. Producers and products include: Ten Thousand Villages, Zatoun olive oil, chocolate, honey, maple syrup, coffee and more! In support of global partnerships and youth mission trips.

December 7, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. at Emmanuel United Church, 691 Smyth Road. Bus Route #55. 613-733-0437 <http://emmanuelunited.ca/>.

Our sympathies go to the friends and family of long-time member Iris Erica Zwanenburg (Franck), died October 8, 2019 in her 90th year.

Benny is an Angel

Who is Benny? Benny, or Benson, is a very handsome, large German boxer dog with a beautiful brown coat with white highlights. He weighs more than 75 lbs and stands at waist height. He is a trained therapy dog for people suffering from anxiety.

A dear friend, Chris, was looking for a golden retriever puppy for his wife and three boys. One day, Chris, who was dealing with terminal brain cancer at the time, was introduced to Benson, and he and his family soon accepted Benny into their family circle. Benny was a calm and gentle soul who helped everyone in the family deal with a very difficult situation. Seeing Benny draping his large body over Chris' wife's lap or lying stretched out in bed between the two parents was quite a sight.

After Chris' death, Benny stayed on as a pillar of strength and calm for the family. Benny remains the family's angel.

Donald Cullen

2020 BUC Calendars

The samples have arrived for your viewing! Pre-order forms for the 2020 BUC calendar are available in the foyer. 8.5"x11" calendars cost \$15 and 11.5"x14" \$22. Pre-orders submitted by November 24, 2019 will be delivered to the church before Christmas, so don't delay! There is no final date for ordering.

Britannia Christmas Potluck Dinner and Entertainment

The Christmas Potluck Dinner will be held on Sunday, December 8. Doors will open at 5:00 pm, with the dinner starting at 5:30 p.m. Come wearing a(n ugly) Christmas sweater or Christmas pyjamas! Bring a salad, main course or dessert to share. Also bring the recipe for your dish to display beside it on the potluck table. You can then take photos of the recipes for your favourite foods! To volunteer to help with the meal, to discuss food allergies and sensitivities, or for any other questions, contact Lana Czelenski.

We are organizing the evening of entertainment. If you wish to contribute to the program, please see or contact Lana Czelenski, at 613-828-6018 or czelenskirific@hotmail.com

Christmas Choral Concert in support of OWECC

Mark your calendar!! This year, seven choirs, including our own BUC Choir, will be taking part. It will be held at St. Stephen's Anglican Church on Sunday, December 1st at 7:00 p.m. There will be a freewill offering. What a great way to start the Christmas season. For more information, please see the poster on the bulletin board or see Marilyn/Verne Bruce (613-828-0704)

FROSTY THE SNOWMAN

The little man made of snow.
The one with whom you played
Not so many years ago?
Well I met him once again while strolling through the park,
The sun was setting, but still not very dark.
The park was a snowy wonderland
With snowflakes falling from the sky,
And while strolling along peacefully
Something strange caught my eye.
A large snowball was rolling rather slowly down the hill.
And when it reached the bottom
It stopped at a perfect standstill.
But then another followed and up it went atop the ball.
Then another came to rest high atop them all!
I stood and watched in wonder as it moved and turned around,
It started climbing up the hill...not making any sound.
My senses said to run away but my feet wouldn't follow.
With wondering eyes I waited and watched,
Just who was this strange snow fellow?
It jumped up high and turned around
And somersaulted back to the ground.
A little afraid I looked around but there wasn't another soul,
That's when I saw the corncob pipe, the button nose,
Two eyes made out of coal.
He wiggled and squiggled and smiled at me,
And uttered "I am Frosty, do you remember me?"
Suddenly there appeared a top hat tall, silky and very round,
And when I placed it on his head he began to dance around.
He came to a stop beside me and took me by the hand
We dashed down the hill and through the trees
Back to childhood land.
We laughed and played all around the park and then we stopped to rest.
He told me once in a while I still come around
To prove that I still exist.
The night was getting darker and he had to be on his way.
So he waved goodbye saying "don't you cry",
I'll be back again someday.
Now there are those who may say I'm silly
And that my mind has gone astray,
Yet I believe in magic ... the magic of childhood days.
So always keep an open mind in everything you do
And who knows ... perhaps one of these days,
Frosty may visit you too.

by Dianne (Dee) Vance, 1991

White Gift Sunday in support of Harmony House

The White Gift service is on Sunday December 1. Please consider making donations for these women and families. Only new items please.

We welcome “Themed Baskets”:

- Laundry basket – laundry soap, dryer sheets, spray & wash
- Paper products basket – Paper towels, Toilet paper, Kleenex.
- Linens basket –curtains, pillows, floor rugs or mats, bed sheets, blankets, comforters (Twin or Queen).
- Bathroom basket – bathmats, bath rugs, bath towels, shower curtains.
- Kitchenware basket –brooms & dustpans, mops & buckets, frying pans, cookie sheets, pots & pans.
- Non-perishable food items – dried goods (rice, pancake mix, flour, sugar) coffee, tea bags, syrup, honey, jams.
- Any denomination of grocery gift cards is also needed and appreciated: Metro, Independent, Loblaws, Food basics, Shopper’s Drug Mart, Giant Tiger, Walmart

Britannia Woods Community Food Pantry.

Thank You Donors!

*Remember, please remember
that after December
comes 31-day January
which can be very dreary
if you have to decide
to have a bus ride
or some food to eat*

*If you go without meat
you might pay for some heat
and a birthday treat?*

*There are many “Hydro poor”
living almost “next door”*

*A donation under “others”
(BWCH) on your envelope
May give your neighbours hope
If they have something to eat
they may pay for some heat
so winter is less bleak*

Christmas Choral Concert

December 1st, 7:00pm

In Support of Ottawa West End
Community Chaplaincy



Featuring: Papa's Friends, The Russell Men's Choir
And the choirs of
Bell's Corner's United Church, Britannia United Church,
Jesus is Lord, St. Stephen's Anglican, and Saint-Remi

Cost: Free (a freewill offering will be received)
Where: St. Stephen's Anglican Church
930 Watson St, Ottawa, ON K2B 6B9
More Info: rom9_16@yahoo.ca 613-250-0325

Images of Advent

Presented by the Eastern Ontario Outaouais Regional Council of the United Church

Mary, Joseph, the Shepherds, the Magi: this four week series is open to anyone interested in exploring these important characters in the Christmas story. Through dreams, visions and dreams of visions, each of these characters has a powerful encounter with the holy. We will explore the spiritual depth of these encounters as they appear in scripture and are interpreted in art (paintings, music, poetry, sculpture, film) throughout the ages. The meeting is presented online on four Tuesdays: Nov 26, December 3, 10, and 16, from 7:00-9:00 pm.

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://united-church.zoom.us/j/193788858>

Meeting ID: 193 788 858

If connecting by phone only: 1 855 703 8985
Canada Toll-free

Remembrance Day – What does it mean to you?

Recently we visited the Syrian family that our Britannia community and neighbours helped to settle in Canada. They moved to Kingston from the Ottawa area in August and are starting a new life there. They know what it is like to escape from a war zone.

While in Kingston my wife and I attended St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, which was built in 1822. The minister, Andrew Johnston, had helped Rim, the Syrian midwife, to find lodging in Kingston when she needed to leave her family to locate there for her first year of work as a midwife. An Anglican priest colleague of Andrew's had provided accommodation.

At the church there was a service of remembrance with guest speaker Rev. Charles Deogratias, a major and a chaplain of CFB Kingston. Charles came to Canada

as a teenaged Rwandan refugee. He told of arriving at the border in Windsor, Ontario. The first word he heard was "Welcome" from a border officer, and he will always remember that moment.

He told of being posted to Afghanistan and riding with the soldiers in an armoured vehicle. He was placed in the "hot seat" behind the driver. A sergeant joked that, if they were hit, the padre would get to heaven first. The padre responded that he would reach out and take the sergeant to heaven with him.

Charles also spoke about a young couple of soldiers who had been living together and had just become engaged. The young man went out on patrol and was killed. The Catholic chaplain was unable to bless the patrol that day as usual and he felt terrible. It fell to Charles himself to inform the fiancée and he described how difficult that was.

Charles' main message for the congregation was that evil still exists in the world and will always be there, but that love, kindness and compassion, as Christ taught, would always conquer the darkness of evil.

Donald Cullen

Mission and Service

"Answering the call" was the title of last Sunday's Mission and Service time at church, Please consider the call to sign up and do this portion of the service for available Sundays in December and sign up on the notice board.

Persistent Faith

Sermon from October 20, 2019

I officiated at the funeral of a dear friend yesterday. Iris Zwanenburg was a long-time member of Britannia United Church. She was a member of our Pastoral Care Team, she attended our Senior's Tea, she volunteered to serve meals at the Ottawa Mission, and she was a constant presence in our weekly Sunday worship services for as long as she could be.

There were three eulogies at the service. Her niece, her daughter and her minister spoke. The three of us never compared notes. In fact the family chose not to meet with me before the service; sending me her own choices for hymns and scripture in an email and leaving the rest to me.

The eulogies were very different. Her niece spoke about her family history; leaving Holland for Indonesia while her father was held in a prisoner of war camp. She spoke of Iris's courage, tenacity, stubbornness and a heart that was full of love for her family. She was the one who searched for her father after the war was over. She held a family together through difficult times that threatened to break them apart, and she became the parent to a mother who could not cope with the pressures of the war and mental illness. As long as she lived, her love was the link that held her family together across the years and the oceans.

Her daughter shared three personal items from Iris' life: a little metal figure of a man that was carried by generations of the family and was believed to bring luck, a small piece of concrete taken from the Berlin Wall the day that it fell, and her engagement ring. A symbol of faith, a symbol of determination, tenacity and stubbornness, and a symbol of undying love.

I spoke about the gifts that Iris gave to our church. One was a hand-sewn wall hanging, representing the Nativity that comes out every year during the season of Advent and remains until Epiphany. The second is the bench that sits by the front door; a gift that came when she noticed people standing outside waiting for their rides home after church, and thought they should have a place to sit down. The third gift was the inspiration of her faith which was drawn from a heart full of love for God, her church, her family and the family of creation.

The one thing that all of the eulogies had in common was love. There are many ways to describe love, but Iris' love was one of action. She cared for the sick, she visited the shut-in, she fed the hungry, she created beauty; and when she saw a need she did something to fix it, like that bench. She could have just felt sorry for the people who were standing, and passed them by as she went on with her day, but she called me on the phone, offered to make a donation to cover the cost, and had two of her church friends follow through with the purchase, installation and dedication. It was a lovely demonstration of love in action.

Iris chose four hymns for her service: I Believe, In the Garden, How Great Thou Art and Here I am Lord. The first three were rather obvious choices that are often sung at funerals. They are hymns of faith that speak about our relationship with God, and point to the eternal promise of God's saving Grace. The fourth hymn seemed an interesting choice. It has become very popular in the church since the publication of the Voices United hymn book and I assumed she probably just liked it. But as I sang the words, following her eulogies, I realized why Iris chose the hymn.

Each verse speaks about our relationship with God. Each verse reassures us that God hears our prayers. Each and every verse carries the promise that God will answer our prayers and then each verse ends with the same question: "Whom shall I send?"

The answer? "Here I am Lord? Is it I Lord? I have heard you calling in the night. I will go Lord, if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart." This is prayer in action.

So often today we hear criticism of the church and one of the recent targets is the phrase, "You are in my thoughts and prayers." I've spoken before about a meme that circulates on Facebook every time there is a crisis somewhere in the world. The caption reads, "Sending our thoughts and prayers" and there is a photograph of a tractor-trailer that is empty inside. The meme is blatantly critical of people who make empty promises and share the phrase as innocuously as the "Hi, how are you?" that two people share as they pass each other in a hallway and continue with their day.

But that is not how prayer works. It is not innocuous; it is not passive; it is not a tractor-trailer full of empty words.

Prayer is an expression of relationship. It begins with our relationship with God.

I once heard someone speak about Psalm 121 from the perspective of a Holy Land traveller. They said that in ancient days, people would stop to pray. They would find an elevated piece of ground and gather rocks together to form a makeshift altar where they would kneel and say their daily prayers. This daily practice strengthened their relationship with God, it wrote God's word on their hearts, and it reassured them that God was with them always. Long after they were gone, those little stone altars remained, and when other travellers on the road looked to the hills for signs of danger, they would see those symbols of hope and faith and be reassured that their help comes from the Maker of heaven and earth, who watches over them by day and by night.

Prayer also extends to our relationship with others.

When we pray for our family, our friends, our country and our world, it may appear to some that we are just offering empty words. And the truth is, that prayer can become just another routine, but when prayer is heartfelt, it leads to change.

There have been many studies about the power of positive thinking and the benefits to our emotional and physical well-being. What is more positive than offering prayers of love and light to our world? And what is more positive than knowing that when we are going through difficult times, there are people who are praying for us because they care? I've been the recipient of those prayers and the love and light that is shared is palpable; it has gives me strength and hope in the most difficult of times and it reassures me that I am not alone.

But there is still another change that prayer facilitates. When we focus on a problem or a need in prayer, it keeps it present, it can lead to clarity, and it can lead to action. Iris saw people standing outside the church: she could have walked on by, she could have even said a quick "God help those people who are standing there." But the love in her heart would not allow her to leave it there. The relationship she shared with her God and her fellow human beings

caused her to pray about it. As she prayed she came up with an answer, and then she did what she could to make it happen. “Whom shall I send?...Here I am Lord.”

In this case, it was an easy fix. It was a simple solution and Iris was met with a positive response that put her prayer into action. But I can tell you that if Iris had not been met with a positive response, she would not have stopped there. You might recall that in addition to being loving, Iris was determined, tenacious and stubborn. Her family recalled a woman who would not let go of an issue until it was resolved to her satisfaction.

Iris reminds me of the widow in Luke 18:1-8. The passage has come to be known as “the parable of the persistent widow.”

As the story goes, there was a widow who was seeking justice from an opponent, but she was faced with a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. Widows in ancient Israel were at the bottom of the social order. She had nothing to offer the judge and he didn't care about her problems, so the unjust judge kept sending her away. But she would not give up. She returned to him time and again saying “Give me justice against my opponent!” At long last, the judge decided that he would answer her request: not because he had a change of heart. He just wanted to get rid of her because she was wearing him out.

Jesus used the unjust judge as a contrast to God who is just and who will answer prayer. The persistent widow is an encouragement to pray always and not lose heart. So we are encouraged to do the same; to seek justice and not lose heart, to stand up to people and systems that are corrupt, even if they have power over us, to pray until it moves us to action, or until our actions move others to change.

The parable ends with a question: “And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?” He will, if we continue to pray. Amen



Christmas Services

**Blue Christmas: Sunday, December 15,
7:00 PM**

For those who have a hard time at this time of year. A quiet and contemplative service.

**Advent Service: Sunday, December 22,
10:15 AM**

Regular service with communion.

**Christmas Eve: Tuesday, December 24,
7:00 PM**

The whole congregation is invited for this service.