

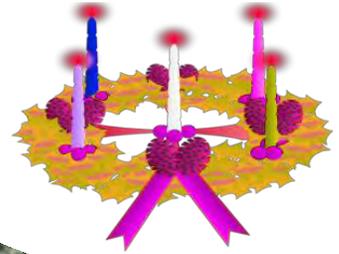


# Topsail United Church

## Advent & Christmas Newsletter 2015



“The Church By  
The Side of The Road”



Photos from Past  
Christmases  
at Topsail  
United Church





## JOURNEYS AND DREAMS

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. I am very pleased to write an Advent and Christmas wish in this Newsletter. Advent is that time in the church year to prepare for the coming of Jesus and what it means for us as individuals and as a community of faith. It prepares us for the fulfillment of the promise heralded by the shepherds who were the first to receive the news of Jesus birth. The Scriptures record that they said to each other: **“Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place which the Lord has made known to us.’ So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the child lying in the manger. ...”** (Luke 2: 15, 16)

Their journey to Bethlehem resulted in allowing them to step outside their present reality for a moment, and dare to dream. In this season of Advent, their experience can also be ours as we prepare to (in essence) step outside our day to day reality and attend special gatherings of family and friends and special church services to celebrate the birth of Jesus. To help us in this journey we have the four Sundays of Advent, one including the Christmas pageant presented by our Sunday School, the Longest Night Service on December 21<sup>st</sup>, and three special services on Christmas Eve at 4:00, 6:00 & 8:00. I hope you can join us for as many of these special services in preparing ourselves to receive the *“Prince of Peace.”*

The life journeys of this past year have brought some happy and some difficult moments. The happy moments we enjoy. The difficult moments, however, remind us that day to day life is often fragile and can change very quickly. We cannot ignore this reality but we do need to step back from it all and regain our focus and rekindle our faith in the goodness that does exist in the world. Advent and Christmas provide us with the opportunities to do just that.

Advent and Christmas comes each year and challenges us with the amazing news - **“His name shall be called Emmanuel - God is with us.”** Advent and Christmas dare us dream the impossible but provide the opportunity for that which is impossible to become possible. Lions and lambs can lie down together. A child can lead us. Deserts can bloom. Hills can be lowered and valleys raised up. God can cast the mighty from their thrones and fill the hungry with good things. And through it all, we can know that God is with us. In this Advent and Christmas season and indeed throughout the entire year let us journey and let us dream.

My wife Dianne joins with me in expressing our thanks for your support of our ministry among you. It is our wish that God will be with you all during Advent and Christmas and throughout the coming year. We wish you all the blessings of this Advent and Christmas Season.

God of all wisdom,  
Our hearts yearn for the warmth of your love,  
And our minds search for the light of your Word.  
Increase our longing for Christ our Saviour,  
And strengthen us to grow in love,  
That at the dawn of his coming  
We may rejoice in his presence  
And welcome the light of his truth.  
Amen. (VU #11)

**Blessings to you all,**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bruce', with a horizontal line underneath.

*Rev. Bruce*



## Message from the Official Board Chair

My wife Louise and I were recently in India with a tour group. While traveling through the Indian countryside between two cities, our tour bus came upon a group of shepherds and their families with their sheep walking along the roadway in the opposite direction. Just after we passed them we came upon a group of brightly dressed people (the men wearing turbans and bright clothes, the ladies bedecked in fine clothes with jewels) traveling in the same direction riding on camels, with donkeys amongst them carrying their possessions. Seeing those men and women with their animals traveling from one place to another it caused me to reflect upon the Christmas story. I thought of the night of our Saviour's birth over two thousand years ago when the word was made flesh and the shepherds and the wise men from the East followed a star to the place of Jesus' birth. It struck me as funny that in such a faraway place in a country where Christians are very much a minority I should see something that reminded me so much of my own faith and the Christmas story.

Reflecting on what I saw then it doesn't strike me now as being so strange. God comes to us in mysterious ways. So does Christmas for those of us who are Christian. Each year we celebrate the mystery of Christ's birth with joy and thanksgiving as did those shepherds and wise men and their

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**Weekday Hours: 9am to 1pm**

families of old. In celebration of Christ's birth we give each other and those around us who we love gifts, just as the wise men did of old. Instead of attending at a stable like the shepherds did, we go to Church to praise the new born King amongst us. We give thanks for all we have and share what we have not just with our family and friends, but with the least among us, with those in need, with the poor and the hungry and those who are lonely. We reach out to them and to one another. We find the better angels in our nature, abiding about us, just as the angels in the Christmas story proclaimed and heralded Christ's birth. We wish each other and all those we meet a Merry Christmas. We follow that Star to the place we call home. We give. We give as we should to our Church, to each other, to those in need. But here is the great irony and mystery of all that giving and of Christmas. It is in and by that giving that we truly receive God's Blessings upon us. A gift out of proportion to all that we

have given. Let us remember that this Christmas in all we do and with every act of kindness, in every place we are where life finds us.

Someone once said, "The past is truly history. The future is still yet a mystery." Therefore let us make the most we can of the present we have been given and can give to all.

From my wife Louise and me, and from all of the Board Members of Topsail United Church and our staff and families to you and yours I wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

*David Jones*

Chair of the Official Board



## Support Our Community Food Bank



The Food Bank is in need of donations throughout the year to meet the demand in our area. Please remember to bring along an item or two when you come to church on Sunday. Always in demand are crackers, tinned pasta, sandwich meats, spaghetti sauce, powdered juice and sweet biscuits.

At Christmas we ask everyone to get involved and make a monetary donation towards providing for the approximately 300 families in need in our area. Again this Christmas each family unit will receive a turkey and a gift card for the purchase of “food only”. A single person will receive a \$50.00 gift card, a family with 2 or 3 people will receive a \$75.00 gift card and a family with 4, 5 or 6 people will receive a \$100.00 gift card. This change from the traditional “Food Hamper” was very well received last year and it allows the family a choice of their own food.

Special envelopes will be available in church from November 29<sup>th</sup> or you can use your regular envelope and indicate “Christmas Hamper”. Donations will be received up until Christmas and credited to your name and envelope number.

Anyone in need of a Christmas Hamper should register with the Food Bank by calling 834-2800 before December 4<sup>th</sup>.

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### Membership Contact Information - Do we have your email address?

So far we have 171 email addresses! This method of communication helps our church save on printing and mailing costs and gives members timely and current information. Please send your email address to : [office@topsailunitedchurch.nf.net](mailto:office@topsailunitedchurch.nf.net) or [valeriehowe@me.com](mailto:valeriehowe@me.com) so that we may add you to the distribution list.

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### Changes in the Church Office Personnel

Lynn Mercer, our Office Manager for many years retired in September. We thank Lynn for all her years of service to Topsail United Church. The Church now has a new Office Manager, Nicole Ivey-Cross and a new email address for the office. [office@topsailunitedchurch.nf.net](mailto:office@topsailunitedchurch.nf.net)

*Thank you to Lynn – “Happy Retirement” and Welcome to Nicole*



## Message from the Treasurer

### The Story of the Money We Spend for Ministry

As of October 31, we have received income of **\$197,105** from the following sources:

<b>Congregational Giving</b>	<b>\$127,853</b>
<b>Fundraising</b>	<b>\$ 32,768</b>
<b>Other (Church Hall rental, Weddings, etc.)</b>	<b>\$ 20,580</b>
<b>Mission and Service</b>	<b>\$ 15,904</b>

So far, we have spent **\$207,259** on the following:

<b>Worship</b>	<b>\$ 82,283</b>
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Each week our lives are enriched through meaningful worship. Our ministers, organist and choir directors prepare and lead us in Sunday worship, as well as in special worship services throughout the year.

<b>Christian Development</b>	<b>\$ 49,752</b>
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Children, teens and adults benefit from educational opportunities our church provides.

<b>Pastoral Care</b>	<b>\$ 44,012</b>
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Our ministers and many volunteers care for the members of our congregation and community in times of sorrow and celebration. Hospitality is important too!

<b>Mission and Service and Outreach</b>	<b>\$ 31,212</b>
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Our congregation has a strong ministry of outreach both locally and through the Mission and Service Fund of the United Church of Canada. We are called to seek justice and equality for others.

As you can see, to the end of October, we are running a Deficit of **\$10,154**. The annual Budget approved at our 2014 AGM in March projected an annual Deficit of **\$8,134**. Your givings make it possible for us to offer faithful ministry. Please prayerfully consider how you can respond to ensure we meet our Budget.

**Respectfully,  
Boyde Clarke,  
Treasurer**

### *Roofing Fund*

Thank you for your support! To date generous donations totaling **\$21,245** have been received from the congregation in support of the TUC Roofing Fund. We are asking for your continued support to offset the **\$23,626** cost.

We are almost there – only **\$2,381** remaining to offset this cost!

Let's see if we can achieve our goal by the end of 2015.



## Join us for Holiday Worship and Events

*All Worship Services begin at 10:30 am unless otherwise noted*

### NOVEMBER 2015

- 22<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary Hymn Sing  
29th First Sunday of Advent Mixed Choir

### DECEMBER 2015

- 5th Breakfast with Santa 8:00 am to 11:00 am (Saturday)  
6th Second Sunday of Advent, Communion, Mixed Choir  
6th Outreach Dinner 6:00 pm (sold out)  
13th Third Sunday of Advent Mixed Choir  
20th Fourth Sunday of Advent, Family Sunday, Christmas Pageant  
Lunch & Carol Sing  
21st (Monday) Longest Night Service, Harpist Ed Kavanagh  
24th (Thursday) Christmas Eve 4:00 pm, Children's Service  
6:00 pm, Youth Service  
8:00 pm, Traditional Worship  
27th 1st Sunday after Christmas Men's Choir

### JANUARY 2016

- 3rd 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Christmas Quiet Service.

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*If you have ideas for articles in the TUC Newsletter or comments about this publication,  
please send them along to [valeriehowe@me.com](mailto:valeriehowe@me.com)*