I think that in the church year, my favorite season is the season of Advent. Even as a child I loved the Advent season of watchful expectancy. In Sunday School we would make Advent ‘blocks’. We placed the candles in a 3X6 rectangle of Styrofoam and decorated the block. At one time, between all my siblings, we had no less than five blocks of Advent candles lined up down the centre of the table. Each week the blaze of light grew as more candles on each block were lit. A sight to behold!

Advent is a time of waiting. Of anticipating. This is not a passive waiting, but a waiting that is filled with an active expectancy. It is a time when you open wide your heart to the Holy. Advent is not simply a precursor to the main Christmas event – it is a grace in its own right. Yet, at the same time, Advent is a prelude to the Christmas miracle. I love Advent because it reminds me to prepare room for God. In its’ four brief weeks, it challenges me to look for God in unexpected places.

For church folks, it’s natural to look for the Spirit in typically churchy situations – at church events or in the singing of Christmas carols or in the growing pile of underwear on the White Gift tree. But the call of Advent is to anticipate and welcome God in the unexpected – in the places where we think God isn’t.

Where is God in the Christmas rush, stress and kafuffle? Where is God in the broken relationships of our lives? In the misunderstandings and tears? Where is God present in the situations we typically think God is absent?

Sometimes it takes a special event for us to realize how much of a hurry we are in, and how, rushing about, we miss God’s Holy presence in the ordinary events of daily life. Events we view as positive and events that are challenging. A silent retreat, or even a meal shared in silence, can become one of those ‘eye-opening’ events. Silence births a mindfulness that reveals just how quickly and mindlessly we move through life, whether walking, or washing our hands, or drinking a coffee. We are always in a hurry. But why the rush? In silence, it is easier to slow down. In slowing down we are given the opportunity to notice textures and sounds and perhaps a deep awareness that we missed before.

This Advent season, awaken to the presence of God all around us by taking time to slow down. For in simply slow-
As we head towards a new year councils focus will be on preparing for the annual meeting creating a financial budget and fundraising opportunities.

At the annual meeting the new governance structure of the United Church of Canada and its implications will be presented, a new mission and vision statement will be put forward for approval and much more.

The annual meeting is also a time when people on all the various teams and committees come and go so please give some thought as to how you might help out in the coming year.

On behalf of Council I would like to thank all those that have given of their time and diverse talents this past year. Without all of you this faith community would not be possible.

I wish you all a joyful Christmas and may the peace of Jesus Christ be with you.

Phil Webb, Chair of council.

Dear GATE Participants and Friends of GATE,

Thanksgiving has come and gone. I hope that the day itself and longer weekend were a time for you to enjoy the presence of family and friends. We all have so much to be grateful for. Know that I am grateful to each of you who have been participants in GATE programs, as well as participants and friends of GATE who continue to be donors.

Yesterday was #Giving Tuesday for many organizations. We have chosen not to participate in #Giving Tuesday because we send you a letter every October asking for your support. Since you have received our annual October request, GATE Charitable Giving has received $4,045.00 toward scholarships: Thank You! The total amount we need for scholarships in Guatemala and El Salvador is $19,905.00. As of this E-Update, we are in need of $15,860.00. Many of you are aware that 100% of what we receive as gift from you is sent to Latin America for scholarships. GATE Charitable Giving does not have anyone who can step forward with matching funds, so we are 100% dependent upon your generosity. Scholarship funds need to be sent to Latin America by mid-December so that registration and other fees can be paid. Classes begin in January 2019.

It is also good to keep in mind that young people who graduate from high schools or universities are able to find good and meaningful jobs, and stay in their home countries. They choose to be agents of change from within. Every person who is educated can empower others.

Thank you for being as generous as you can. You DO make a difference!

Blessings and Gratitude,

Marie Des Jarlais, FSPA GATE Director
Christmas greetings and blessings to all from the United Church Women. We thank everyone for all the support we have received from you this year in so many ways. The two Thrift Sales were very successful and we believe much needed in our increasingly concerning economic times. As a result of the sales we were able to donate $20,000 to the Church Council as well as supporting many local, Calgary, Canadian and world wide causes. The full list is available in the UCW Annual Report posted in the church library. We are grateful for the more than 100 volunteers from our church and community who enable us to do this for our larger community.

The UCW executive for 2019 - 2021 are:

Chairperson - Alice Bramley
Vice-Chairperson - Lynne Fair
Secretary - Sharon White
Treasurer - Anne Godsman

Thrift Sale dates for 2019 are later than usual due to Easter and Thanksgiving falling later than usual. They are: Thrift Sales - May 2, 3, 4/2019 and Oct. 24, 25, 26/19

Please mark your calendars. We hope to see you there too!

Our Church Family had to say a sad farewell to a long time member in November, Blanche Arthur. Our thoughts and prayers to all of her family and friends.
Thank you to everyone that has supported Season 2 of our Arts on 817 concert series. We have had 3 very successful concerts to date and have 3 more booked in the new year. If you are looking for last minute Christmas gifts there are still tickets available for the upcoming 3 shows. $85.00 for all 3 compared to $100.00 when purchased separately. For tickets contact Linda Derksen 403-901-2797. Please mark you calendar for Saturday February 2, 2019 when we welcome Women of Note.

Women of Note
Elizabeth Hoyt - Surdhar, Mezzo Soprano, & Janet Scott - Hoyt, Piano

Strathmore United Church
February 2, 2019 - Saturday - 7:30 pm
Adult - $30.00
Youth - $10.00 - 17 and under
Tickets: call Linda - 403-901-2797
Tickets purchased online at www.smoreuc.com must be picked up at the door.
"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a person remains in me and I in them, they will bear much fruit. John 15: 1-9

STRATHMORE UNITED CHURCH

410—Fourth Street
Strathmore, Alberta
T1P 1B4
Phone: 403-934-3025
Fax: 403-934-3081
Website: www.smoreuc.com
E-mail: smoreuc@efirehose.net

The Church Office will be open Wednesdays & Thursdays from 9:00 am to 12 noon

If you have questions, concerns or wish to contribute to The Vine please contact Karen Wilkie at 403-934-3579 or email at ckwilkie@shaw.ca

Upcoming Events

The church office will be closed from Dec. 21st — Jan. 9. Please feel free to email or call the church and leave a message as Susan will be checking them over the holidays.

♦ Dec 22—Open house for Bob Giles 85th Birthday Lambert Village 2—4
♦ Dec. 23—Regular service—10:30
♦ Dec. 24—Christmas Eve Service—7:30 pm
♦ Dec. 30—Regular service—10:30
♦ Jan 8—Book club meets—1 pm
♦ Jan 10—Bible Study, book of Acts—10 am
♦ Jan 10—Last day for all Annual Reports to be handed into the office.
♦ Feb 2—Arts on 817 presents Women of Note.
♦ Feb. 3—Annual General Meeting after church, potluck then meeting to follow.

Check out our website:
http://www.smoreuc.com
If you have something you would like to add, contact Susan at the church office.

♦ If you wish to sign up for Pre- Authorized Remittance (PAR) or to receive envelopes, please contact Susan in the church office—403-934-3025.

Please accept our thanks for all that you have done to make Strathmore United Church the church it is. Merry Christmas and Blessings in 2019.

Ongoing Events

If you are booking events at the church you must book through the office.

Church 50th Anniversary Hasti Notes—$5.00

♦ Last Sunday of the month at 10 am Rozella’s group shares their wonderful music, come and enjoy or join in.
♦ Last Sunday Soup & Bun after church
♦ Wednesday—10 am—2:00 pm in the Church basement the Quilting group meets. Bring a bag lunch and come to stitch and chat. The quilts are donated to various charities.
♦ The fourth Tuesday of the month—7 pm Church Council meets.
♦ First Tuesday of the month—1 pm Book Club meet in the library. Bring a favorite book and share the story.
♦ First Tuesday of the month—Agape meet 7:30 Lambert Village. All women welcome.
♦ Third Thursday Sept—June — the Mary Martha UCW group meet. Contact Peggy McLean 403-934-3197 for time and location.
♦ Third Saturday of the month—10 am the Property Team meets. Please let them know of any property related requests before they meet.