



Grapevine Advent 2017



FONTHILL UNITED CHURCH

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From the Minister

Christmas... Already?... Again!... Really.

Whether we are ready or not, Christmas is coming. People are already putting up their decorations. The stores will be crowded with shoppers. We'll make plans to visit with family and friends. We'll eat too much, maybe drink too much, not get enough rest and by the end of it we may well be exhausted. We do the same thing again every year. But God promises to do a new thing.

One of the Prophecies we associate with Christmas is this one from Isaiah 43:18-19.

“Do not remember the former things,
or consider the things of old.
I am about to do a new thing;
now it springs forth,
do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness
and rivers in the desert.”

Christmas is about a word from God addressed to a world in its exhaustion. Its message is in two parts. The first part is do not remember former things. Think of all the energy we use up on “former things.” We dwell on “the good old days” when life seemed simpler and better than it is now. Or we dwell on the negatives, going over what we wish we had not said and done. We remember how badly we were treated and who was to blame.

But then the gospel word comes, “Do not remember former things.” When God speaks clearly and acts decisively, it becomes a time for letting go and forgetting, for giving up and releasing all that is past. The past is being displaced by what God is still doing: coming into the world in new ways to heal and reconcile. Christmas is a time to stop and notice the newness that God is sending in our lives. Christmas is really a time to start over in a fresh place.

Welcome to Fonthill United Church

What kind of people do we welcome to Fonthill United Church? Who feels welcome among us? Coventry Cathedral posted a welcome sign that attracted a lot of attention. Other churches have adapted it and copied it. Here is one version of it.

We welcome everyone! But we extend a special welcome to those who are single, married, divorced, gay, filthy rich, dirt poor. We extend a special welcome to those who are crying new-borns, skinny as a rail or could afford to lose a few pounds. We welcome you if you can sing like Pavarotti or just growl quietly to yourself. You're welcome here if you're “just checking us out,” just woke up or just got out of jail. We don't care if you're more Christian than the Archbishop of Canterbury, or haven't been in church since Christmas 10 years ago. We extend a special welcome to those who are over 60 but not grown up yet, and to teenagers who are growing up too fast. We welcome basketball mums, hockey dads, starving artists, tree-huggers, latte-sippers, vegetarians, junk-food eaters. We welcome those who are in recovery or still addicted. We welcome you if you're having problems or you're down in the dumps or if you don't like “organized religion,” (*We're not that keen on it either*).

If you blew all your offering money at the casino, you're welcome here. We offer a special welcome to those who think the earth is flat, work too hard, don't work, can't spell; and those who are here because granny is visiting and wanted to go to church. We welcome those who are inked, pierced or both. We offer a special welcome to those who could use a prayer right now, had religion shoved down your throat as a kid or got lost and wound up here by mistake. We welcome pilgrims, tourists, seekers and doubters, and you!”

It comes easily and naturally to welcome people who are something like us. But the kingdom of God that Jesus loved to talk about in his parables is a much more diverse community. It includes all kinds of people. Wouldn't church life be much more interesting if we could find ways to welcome people who are as diverse as God's kingdom is?

Annual Meeting

The annual meeting of the congregation is being planned for February 18, 2018 immediately after worship. At this meeting we will be electing the governing body of Fonthill United called the Church Council. The Council has four functioning committees:

Worship and Membership

Pastoral Care

Finance and Property

Ministry and Personnel

In 2017 we had 14 members on Council and additional people who served on these committees. It would be better to have more. So if you have an interest in serving the church on Council or on a committee, please offer yourself in this service. Council normally meets once a month for about 8 or 9 meetings per year. It's important to have good representation from the congregation on Council and you might be one to bring that to us.

Local Missions: A Discussion Starter

You may not know this but Fonthill United's mission includes supporting those who are making a difference in the Niagara Region. When we give our offering, 90% of it goes to support church operations; 8% of it goes to support the Mission and Service Fund of the United Church; and 2% goes to support what we call "local missions." People have a good sense of what the Mission and Service Fund does because we hear regular "Minutes for Mission" in church. But it has been a while since we talked about our "local missions."

Years ago there was an Outreach Committee which met regularly to distribute grants but it has been more than a decade since an Outreach Committee was active. In recent years the responsibilities for the local missions were carried mostly by Marion Egerter who consulted with me. Once a year Marion and I met to propose the list of local missions that would receive the grants and that was approved with the budget at the Annual Meeting. The list did not change much over the years but the grants were reduced from \$500 to \$300 each. There are 10 agencies which received these grants in 2017. I've listed them at the end of this section with a short description of the work they do. You can find a more complete description by following the links on the church's website under the "what we do" tab.

I think we would all want to acknowledge that the work these agencies do is very worthwhile and that they should get the support they need from the community. There are probably people among us who do support them with our donations. However, the discussion I would like us to have is whether Fonthill United Church should continue to support these "local missions" with annual \$300 grants or whether that money might better be re-directed to support the Mission and Service Fund of our parent denomination, or somewhere else.

On one side we could say, every little bit helps these organizations do their work. That is true, but let's be aware that \$300 represents a small part of their annual budgets and only helps a little. It appears to me that there isn't much interest among the membership of our congregation in how these agencies spend their money or in the work they do. Maybe instead, we should support mission work in which we are more likely to take an active interest.

Another aspect to bring into this discussion is the fact that the Remits we studied last year, were all passed by a majority of presbyteries and congregations. This means that as of January 2019, the United Church of Canada will institute a new funding formula. Fonthill United Church will be assessed once to support the national Denominational Council and again to support the Regional Council. In addition we will be expected to continue supporting the Mission Fund. I believe that we can meet these challenges, but we may want to support only those local missions which need our help more and to which we are committed.

I will be discussing this with Council members and I invite your participation in this discussion. Please let me, or a Council member know your thoughts. Which of the local missions do you care about most? At the annual meeting, we may decide to keep doing what we have been doing (churches are pretty good at that). Or we may decide to do something different this year in preparation for the new funding model in 2019.

Here is the list of the "local missions" we support with a short description of each one.

The Hope Centre - To assist the most vulnerable citizens in Welland and the surrounding area in their time of need by providing food and housing stability, and to empower change in their lives by increasing their future resilience to poverty and increasing their capacity to be self-sustaining through counselling and training.

Brock Ecumenical Chaplaincy - Brock Campus Ministers work as a team to be educational and spiritual resources in an ecumenical and multi-faith environment. They offer friendly and supportive advice, opportunities for learning and growth, and various events to support student life including solidarity experiences, study groups, and student dinners.

Cave Springs Camp - The Mission of Cave Springs Camp is to serve Christ by encouraging campers and staff to grow in their relationship with God and others while learning about Christ, themselves and creation. Cave Springs Camp is a United Church camp, offering a unique summer camp experience since 1951. The camp is guided and supported by a dedicated group of volunteers that form the Board of Directors, highly qualified and enthusiastic summer staff and volunteers from the local community and area churches.

Pelham Cares - Provides maintenance of a food bank and the following services: Sponsorship of youth with limited financial resources to enable their participation in sporting, recreation and educational opportunities; Transportation to medical and related appointments, for residents of Pelham, mainly to senior citizens, who are without transportation; Responds to families of fire or other catastrophic loss by providing emergency food, supplies or short term accommodation; Provides holiday food hampers, for seasonal special occasions and to supplement regular food hampers; Provides back packs filled with school supplies and school snacks to children of their registered client families, at 'back-to-school' time.

Habitat for Humanity - Habitat for Humanity Niagara builds safe, decent and affordable homes for low-income families in need in Niagara. Our partner families purchase a Habitat home through a no-down payment, no-interest mortgage with monthly payments set at no more than 25% of the family's gross monthly income. Home ownership with Habitat for Humanity Niagara enables families to rely less on social assistance, build equity and break the cycle of poverty. We dedicate ourselves to helping families become successful through home ownership.

Bethlehem Place - Bethlehem Housing and Support Services is a multi-service organization serving the diversified needs of Niagara residents by offering support for individual growth through housing and other focused services.

Community Care Thorold - "We compassionately provide vital services and assistance to individuals and families that meet their basic needs and help bridge their journey to self-sufficiency."

Women's Place Niagara - The Mission of Women's Place of South Niagara Inc. is to end abuse and violence by empowering women and their children through the provision of safe shelter, counselling, education and community partnerships. Women's Place of South Niagara Inc. envisions a community where women and their children live free from abuse and violence.

Resource Association for Teens (The RAFT) - The RAFT, operated by the Niagara Resource Service for Youth, contributes to the welfare of our community by helping at-risk youth, families and neighbourhoods become independent and self-sufficient. Our services strengthen the emotional and social well-being of clients and act as a portal to community resources. Services are based on the principles of Empowerment, Quality of Life, Dignity and Respect. Services are provided in a supportive and caring environment which encourages independence and self-reliance.

Harvest Suppers - Providing community suppers to the people of Welland at Central United Church.

Open Arms Mission (not a "local mission" but supported by the UCW) - Open Arms Mission is called to demonstrate God's love, peace and justice to those living in economic, social and spiritual poverty in the Welland area. As a not-for-profit Christian faith organization, we acknowledge that every person is created in the image of God and has inherent value and dignity. We assist as many people as possible to experience full participation in society.

Defibrillator Training

You may have noticed that Fonthill United now has a defibrillator. If you haven't seen it yet, look for it in the front lobby next to the elevator. It's in a box with a glass window; the defibrillator kit is in a red pouch. It was placed by Heart Niagara at no cost to us. In September, eight people from the congregation took the training to use it and to administer CPR (Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation). We hope it never happens but if someone were to collapse, the first thing to do is call 911 for an ambulance. Then we would use the defibrillator to determine if the person is having a heart episode. If they are, then the defibrillator will advise a shock to stop the fibrillation. Meanwhile someone should administer CPR until the ambulance arrives.

The 911 dispatcher knows where the defibrillator is and it may happen that someone nearby is having an emergency and will come into the church looking for it. Show them where it is and let them take it right away!

In case of an emergency, you should know who took the training so you can find them and ask them to help. (This list is also in the box.)

Bob Laing	Alvin Penner
Bill Laing	Bill Outred
Liz Dalton	Patrice Walker
Marian McDonald	Garry van Bruchem

We hope that we never have to use it, but it's good to know that if we need to, we are prepared to respond to a medical emergency. And thank you to Brian McDonald for installing the box in its location.

Faithfulness and Generosity: Our Way of Living Together – The 2017 Stewardship Report

The theme of our Stewardship program this year was “Faithfulness and Generosity: our way of living together.” This program gave us the opportunity to celebrate one another's faithfulness and to encourage one another's generosity. We invited everyone in the congregation to set a goal for their giving by completing Intentions Forms and we challenged everyone to consider increasing their support a little, to meet the congregation's financial needs.

Although we no longer have an active Stewardship Committee and therefore we did not give stewardship the level of attention we did in other years, we are happy to report that half the congregation participated by returning the Intentions Forms. We understand that not everyone cares to do this but we *are* grateful for the many people who did.

We have some encouraging results to share with you today: Seven people made intentions for the first time, so we want to congratulate them for participating. Seventeen people increased their intentions over the previous year so we thank them for their increased generosity. And four people changed from giving by envelope to giving by Pre-Authorized Remittance (we call that PAR).

We now have almost as many people participating in PAR as we had people return their intentions form.

When you give by PAR, the church receives the amount you decided to give once a month, and you don't have to do anything more. It comes off your bank statement on the same day each month and that provides the church with a steady, predictable income to meet expenses. When you give by PAR you don't need to remember your Sunday envelope. You don't have to be sure you have withdrawn money from the bank, and you don't have to write any cheques. Even if you happen to be away for some weeks, you never have to catch up on your offering because the church gets the support that you arranged to give. And when you have to change that, all it takes is a phone call to the secretary Patrice, and no questions will be asked. We now have 46 people who contribute by PAR, setting an example of faithful support.

When the amount that people pledged for the 2018 year is totaled, it comes to just over one hundred thousand dollars. This gives the Finance Committee a foundation on which they can plan the church's budget for the upcoming year. More importantly, however, it reassures us that our way of living together is the way of Faithfulness and Generosity.

On behalf of Church Council, I thank everyone for their participation.

Discussion Group

After church, for seven Sundays, the discussion group met to view a series of video lectures by John Dominic Crossan entitled *Violence Divine*. In these lectures, Crossan tries to reconcile the God of love as seen in Jesus with the violence of God seen throughout from Genesis to Revelation. What's happening? Why is the God of love also the God who sends down punishment from on high? Why is Jesus who came non-violently, pictured in the Book of Revelation as the one who finally kills all the evil-doers? From start to finish there is a double pulse in the Bible. It asserts God's love and justice and then it tries to subvert God's love and justice. For every assertion there is an equal and opposite subversion. The Bible is honest about this and so should we be. We hear God's assertion that we love one another and do justice for all. Then our civilization subverts it by offering everyone ways to keep what they can for themselves and to deny others their share.

What to do? Crossan's answer is to follow Jesus' path of non-violence on the way to justice and peace. And to do it, before it's too late. Civilization keeps getting more ruthless at violence and more efficient at killing. On this path, humanity will destroy itself. The path of Jesus offers the alternative.

Service of Hope

For as long as I have been the minister in Fonthill, I have participated in an annual Service of Hope for the bereaved. In this service, people lit candles to remember someone who had died the previous year and to revisit their grief prior to Christmas. The service was organized by the Pelham Clergy Fellowship aided by two of the local funeral homes. Over the past few years, however, participation declined and with several clergy vacancies in Pelham there was less energy available for it this year. Therefore there will not be a Service of Hope this year.

Garry van Bruchem



The 14th annual "***Homes for the Holidays***" Christmas House Tour was held November 18. Once again our church was the centre of activity in the days leading up to the big event and on the actual day!

The organizing committee, consisting of Virginia Haun, Sharron Bradley, Dora Drennan, Patrice Walker and Carolyn van der Sluis, relied on many, many volunteers to make the event successful. To give you an idea of how many people were required to bring this year's house tour to fruition, on the actual day there were 88 shifts/jobs that needed to be filled. 60 of those shifts were filled by congregational members and the rest of the shifts were filled by students working for community service hours. These shifts include hosts/hostesses in the homes, volunteers in the kitchen, at the bake table, in the Narthex and in the refreshment area.

And prior to this, there were numerous other tasks including posting of flyers locally and throughout the region, purchasing ingredients for and the baking of the scones, calling congregational members to encourage donations to the bake table, sorting baked goods prior to the sale, decorating the church, etc. And then there are the bakers, many of whom were very generous when asked to provide baked goods.

This is not just a five person committee endeavour, but a real church and external community affair, and your participation is such an essential ingredient. We rely heavily on you volunteering and on that of students who require community service hours.

While this **IS** a successful fundraising event for Fonthill United, it is only successful because of all of you. We all give and do what we can, but when the requests go out from our committee, you all respond positively and unequivocally and therefore ensure the success of the tour.

We extend a note of appreciation to the home owners who willingly opened their homes to the decorators and to the over 400 visitors and volunteers; to the designer/decorators; and to the sponsors of the house tour. We would ask that you support these businesses, as in reality, there would be no house tour without their participation!

The Bake Table once again was very profitable. Proceeds generated from the bake sale: \$2,108

Actual number of tickets sold totaled 470. Proceeds generated from ticket sales: \$9400

Total receipts for the 14th annual "***Homes for the Holidays***" Christmas House Tour: \$11,508

The organizing committee thanks you all for your tremendous support!

Submitted by Carolyn van der Sluis and Virginia Haun, Co-chairs

The Men's Club Future - Meeting January 20, 2018

The Men's Club didn't get off the ground this fall since President Marvin Myhre fell victim to health problems. At the time of this writing, November 13, he is in rehab at Hotel Dieu-Shaver Hospital and appreciates short visits by members of the congregation. His welfare is very much on the minds of his many friends.

To date no one has come forward to lead the group which has been in place since 1987. Marvin has presided since 1994, the same year that the Spaghetti Supper became an annual event of the group. Marvin does not anticipate that he will be resuming the chair so we must find a new leader, or perhaps the time has come for the group to stand down.

The regular list of attendees will be phoned prior to the meeting but any other men who are interested in attending may inform Rich Miller, Harland Young or Keith Rae.

Submitted by Keith Rae

Pastoral Care Committee

It has been a year since the formation of the Pastoral Care Committee. After having completed the 8 week training course at Welland Hospital under the direction of Rev. Robert Bond, our goal was to meet with or call everyone in our congregation.

In planning, we designated our visits according to need, creating three lists. We first visited those in need of apparent care in terms of illness, being shut-in, or alone. We then contacted those who are not attending regularly, just to touch base once again, and finally visited or called regularly attending members. These visits I believe were welcomed and enjoyed by both those visited and by everyone on our committee, and provided a wonderful opportunity to get to know everyone in a more personal way.

I have always felt that there is such a warmth that exists at Fonthill United and ongoing care always by our people for each other.

The Pastoral Care Committee continues to meet with Garry on the first Wednesday of each month. This provides a time to share updates regarding our members' concerns and needs. Please let us know if you would like a visit, or just a chat anytime.

Thanks to those on the committee: Sheila Laundry, Sharon Middleton, Joan Rigg, Joyce Teather, Garry van Bruchem.

*Respectfully submitted,
Marleene Kretchman, Committee Chair*

Finance and Property Report

A deficit of \$14,665 is evident in the Operating Fund at the end of October. While this amount appears significant, it is well below our forecast of \$31,027 and approximately \$1,400 below last year. Full details for this positive variance were outlined in the fall Grapevine. At this point we are projecting a year-end deficit in the \$8,000 range and we would sincerely appreciate it if everyone can keep this in mind as you consider any additional tax driven year-end gifts. We do expect to provide a full verbal report early in December.

It appears the roof repairs completed in September have sealed the issue, so to speak. We are currently reviewing quotes to replace our fire alarm monitoring panel and expect to have this completed by year-end. The current panel, while functioning, is obsolete and new parts when required are not available.

Over the past few months, numerous repairs have been completed throughout the building and exterior. Every effort is being made to complete regular inspections, and repairs completed as necessary. We believe it is common knowledge that the building is older and repairs and maintenance can be more frequent than in the past.

We thank you all for your continued support of Fonthill United.

Jim Bradley, Chair of Finance and Property Committee

Year-End Contributions – Our books will remain open until Thursday, January 4, 2018 to accept contributions for 2017. All cheques for 2017 donations must be dated before December 31, 2017.

A Thank You for a Bequest

Dr. Brown Irvin died on April 10, 2017 at the age of 104. In his will was a bequest for \$2000 to be used for the general operations of the church.

Council felt excerpts from Jim Bradley's letter of thanks to Brown's daughter, Susan for the donation and Susan's response merited mention to the congregation.

Jim's letter in part: "Dr. Irvin was well known to several of our longer term members who shared similar backgrounds, in that they moved on to varied careers after spending early years on the family farm. In addition they also shared interests in sports, music and literature and we feel the church does provide a very appropriate venue for members to share stories and experiences." (Brown stayed on the family farm at Holstein after high school graduation before going back to school, earning qualification as an osteopath in the USA, and returning to St. Catharines and later Cambridge to practice his profession.)

Susan's response: "Thank you for your letter in September regarding dad's gift to the church. I remember our mother playing the piano and organ occasionally in Wesley United Church in Galt when we were young. Dad supplied his pride and his excellent tenor voice to the congregation. There was always music in our home. Unfortunately, we didn't truly appreciate their 'gifts' until adulthood. We need to learn to give thanks and appreciation to our parents earlier in life. Dad was proud of your church."

Submitted by Keith Rae

From the Pelham Syrian Refugee Constituent Group

The Alhamoud Family has made good progress settling into their new community. The Mayor of Welland had an informal gathering to welcome the family and presented each with a small gift. The landlord and his family have been extremely welcoming and actually had gifts awaiting all the children on their arrival and a gift card for the parents. Eryam, Faisal and Mohamad started school in Welland on October 10. Aseel was enrolled in Day Care in Welland in mid-October and both Hamd and Hala attend English as a Second Language classes daily. We attended the children's first parent/teacher interview with Hamd and had a translator join us by phone. The children are all settling in and progressing well.

The committee members have been busy helping the family with the following: completing a significant amount of paperwork to obtain the necessary documentation such as OHIP cards, Personal Identification Cards, school registrations, benefits, finding a dentist and doctor, etc.; orientation to the area; shopping for winter clothing, helping them attend to their immediate medical and dental needs, helping them to learn the local bus system, introducing them to the grocery stores that carry Halal foods, setting up utilities, a budget and banking, and just generally supporting them and visiting to make sure they do not feel alone. When they have mail to review or questions, we are available to help. Rhonda and Lyn have also downloaded a translation program on our cell phones so Hamd can text us when he needs help. This is working pretty well. Hamd and Hala will also on occasion call one of us to ask for our help.

We have tested many different versions of the translation programs and while they do help us communicate, they are not perfect. Hamd has a program on his cell phone as well, so between us we can generally get the message, however for more complex issues we continue to obtain support from a translator. For anyone wishing to download a program, we have found ITranslate most effective. You need to use the UAE Arabic because it is closest to their dialect. The next step is teaching them how to use email which the school and many businesses use to communicate.

We were able to obtain a used laptop computer that had been refurbished for the family. The school strongly encouraged us to get one. We downloaded a program the school uses to help teach the children English so they can practice at home. We have spent time helping them learn how to access and work with the program. We also downloaded a game for the parents on the recommendation of the school. It is aimed at teaching adults English. We were also able to teach Hamd how to use Internet Banking so he can better monitor their finances.

On Monday November 20, we held a Meet and Greet in the lower hall of Fonthill United Church. There was good representation from all four churches involved and the community at large. We were very pleased with the degree of interest shown and how welcome the family were made to feel. The family was genuinely pleased to have the opportunity to thank all those who have been supporting their move to Canada. This also gave us the opportunity to thank Sima Nahli, the translator with the Welland Heritage Committee, who has been a wonderful support to our committee.

On Friday November 24, we will be making a presentation to the students of Glynn A Green School, thanking them for all of their support. They have contributed over \$5500 to our fundraising goal and collected all the food to stock up the home for our family's arrival.

On Tuesday November 28, Gainsborough School (Lyn's daughter's school) will be making a donation to our fundraising efforts. Keith Rae will be attending to accept the cheque. They are also planning for a Christmas gift for each of the children.

As we get to know Hamd and Hala, they are beginning to open up a bit more about their life in Syria and Jordan. They are also showing a genuine interest in our family situations. We are careful to let them share information at their own pace as they feel comfortable. We have even met their family in Jordan through a program on their phones. We have been thanked on behalf of all of you for helping their family.

In closing we found an article, written by a refugee, that gives us some food for thought as we communicate with our family. The article is shared here verbatim:

“... that was the key to being embraced by the population of our town, a community that openly took credit for the fact that we were still alive, but wanted to know nothing of our past. Month after month, my mother was asked to give her testimony in churches and women’s groups, at schools and even at dinners. I remember sensing the moment when all conversation would stop and she would be asked to repeat our escape story. The problem, of course, was that they wanted our salvation story as a talisman, no more. No one ever asked what our house in Iran looked like, what fruits we grew in our yard, what books we read, what music we loved and what it felt like now not to understand any of the songs on the radio. No one asked if we missed our cousins or grandparents or best friends. No one asked what we did in summers or if we had any photos of the Caspian Sea. ‘Men treat women horribly there, don’t they?’ the women would ask. Somehow it didn’t feel OK to tell them about my funny dad with his pockets full of sour cherries, or my grandpa who removed his false teeth when he told ghost stories. Such memories, of course, would imply the unthinkable; that Iran was as beautiful, as fun, as energizing and romantic, as Oklahoma or Montana or New York.”

The Al Zain family is still going through the approval process. Currently they are undergoing the eligibility and security investigations. We will let you all know once a decision has been made.

Submitted by Rhonda Baker and Lyn Taylor, Co-Chairs



Back row: Welland Mayor Frank Campion, Hamd, Hala
Front Row: Fisal, Mohamad, Eryam, Aseel

Upcoming Christmas Season Services and Events

Dec. 3	9:30 am	Advent Communion
Dec. 3	7:00 pm	Christmas Carol Service at Wesley United in Welland
Dec. 6	2:00 pm	Lessons, Carols & Cookies Service
Dec. 17	9:30 am	Fonthill Choir Christmas Cantata
Dec. 24	9:30 am	No morning service at Fonthill
Dec. 24	11:00 am	Joint Family Service at Fenwick
Dec. 24	9:00 pm	Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion at Fonthill
Dec. 31	11:00 am	Joint Worship Service at Fenwick
Jan. 7	9:30 am	Joint Worship Service at Fonthill

Coats for Kids and Grownups

The cold weather is starting to settle in again and in Fonthill we are mostly insulated from meeting people who cannot afford to buy winter clothes, but our neighbouring church in downtown Welland is seeing the need and inviting us to help them respond with compassion. They are collecting coats for kids and adults. There is a need for kid’s snow suits, and winter coats and sweaters for adults. If you have anything you will not be using or if you can buy a kid a snowsuit, it will be used by someone who needs it. You can bring them here. We’ll hang them on the coat rack by the office and deliver them to Central United, our partners in God’s mission.

Daily Devotional Booklets are offered, free of charge, to the Fonthill United Church family. This year we started offering the United Church of Canada’s booklet, *These Days* which is replacing the *Upper Room*, an American publication that many people here enjoyed for years. *These Days* is published four times a year, with three months of devotionals included in each copy. They can be found beside the bulletin board on the lower level of the church and are offered on a first-come, first-serve basis. Anyone is welcome to take a copy home.

