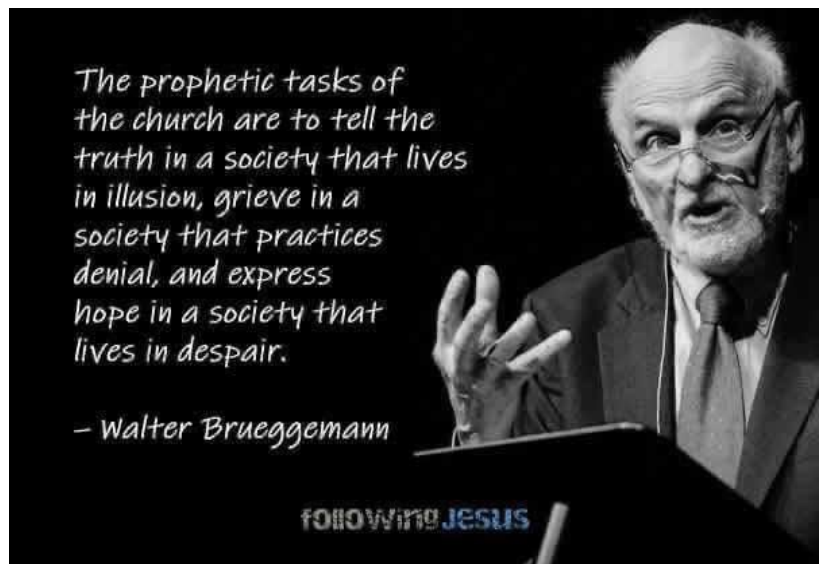


Christmas 2023 Acorn



From the Minister's desk:

As we approach the season of Advent and look once again at the ancient stories of Jesus' birth, we are reminded by the current events around us of the strife, harm and hardship of political oppression and warfare. We can become overwhelmed by the scope of the injustices in this world. So, what are we to do to find direction and a sense of peace within our own hearts so that it may inform us on how and what we may offer as a response. I would like to offer some touch points of spiritual practices that will both inform and deepen our hearts and minds.



Find community in a faith community. Many have learned that they are most healthy, both spiritually and psychologically, when they are travelling with companions on the path. We too need the nourishment of a community in which we can live our faith authentically. Such communities foster a sacred respect for each member and gratitude for the diversity of gifts that each individual brings to the table. In loving communities of faith, we experience the Holy Spirit working in powerful ways and get a taste of what it might mean to bring the Kingdom of God to earth.

Get out into nature, where the Creator's love is spelled out for us. There, enveloped by God's love, we can taste God's mercy and realize the presence of God in all things. For many, mountains and waters are "thin places," where it's easier to encounter God. If we aren't able to hit the trails or get to the shore, though, we can still find God's touch in our daily surroundings: seeing a flower popping out of a crack in the sidewalk, feeling a cool breeze upon our faces, or smelling fresh-cut grass.



Be mindful of the gifts God bestows on us each moment by focusing on the present instead of dwelling on the past or worrying about the future. God is continuously creating and breathing life into all of creation.

No moment is trivial since each one contains a divine kingdom and heavenly sustenance.

Dear Lord, make me a channel of disturbance.
Where there is apathy, let me provoke,
where there is compliance, let me bring questioning,
where there is silence, may I be a voice.
Where there is too much comfort
and too little action, grant disruption.
Where there are doors closed and hearts locked,
grant me the willingness to listen.
When laws dictate and pain is overlooked..
when tradition speaks louder than need...
grant that I may seek rather to do justice
than to talk about it.
Disturb us, O Lord,
to be with, as well as for the alienated;
to love the unlovable as well as the lovely,
Lord make me a channel of disturbance.
- Author unknown

Take time each day to cultivate silence. Calm your mind and heart, and listen for the prompting of the Spirit. Fr. Adolfo Nicolás, SJ, speaks poignantly to this: "That means that our hearts are our sanctuaries and at the bottom of every activity, every reflection, every decision, there is silence, the kind of silence that one shares only with God."

Pray daily. As you reflect on the events of the day and your responses to them, you will notice where you encountered the Divine. Through the practice of the prayer, we are reminded that our God is not a far-off, disinterested God, but a God who is present throughout our days and intimately available to us.

Make or listen to music that lifts your soul. Good music is a sure - fire way to fill your cup. Immerse yourself in the harmony, lyrics, rhythm and what feelings they bring to you. Music provides us with a way of expressing deeply held thoughts or feelings in ways we would have never imagined.

Take time away to renew yourself. On the seventh day, God rested. God commands us to rest too! Sabbath requires that we examine what renews us and what we need to step away from to make space for renewal. Sabbath is a way of finding balance by building regular rest, recreation, and time away into the schedule.

Humor helps enlarge one aspect of a person's life so that it becomes to some extent laughable. But that said, humor would never do any harm. Humor is, moreover, important for a healthy spiritual life. Laugh at yourself, laugh with others, and let the God of surprises lighten your load.

Take gentle care of yourself and others. We believe that each individual is created in the image and likeness of God and that we are each temples of the Holy Spirit. When we digest this fully, we come to realize just how important it is to care for ourselves in our totality—mind, body, and spirit. Recognizing the Divine present within each individual also serves to inform us of the sacred responsibility we have to care for others.

These are just a few of the ways in which spiritual practices offer to fill our cups. May we keep our cups filled so that joy, and compassion are nourished and shared.

And may you be blessed with hope, peace, joy and love,

Wendy

Rev. Wendy Noble

Doggie Tales by Ilka

Hi Folks,

Some of you will remember meeting me at the Blessing of the Pets Service. I was excited to be blessed twice – at Rowntree and at Dundas Street Centre. I had fun meeting the people at the service and was very proud of myself for being a very good girl! I told my sister Ida all about it!

Ida sent me a note (and some cookies) from Thunder Bay, to tell me that she and Dolce and Jack (my former Westie family) were out hunting in the yard late one night and encountered a SKUNK! I think you know how that went. Ida got sprayed in the face while Dolce and Jack ran for help. I guess running didn't protect them from the spray of the skunk. There were many baths needed to take care of the skunk perfume.



Mommy has warned me many times, when we go out walking at night, that I can't play with the black and white "Kitties". We have seen one or two while out. It seems they like garbage night. I have met many other dogs in our neighbourhood while out for walks and have tried to make friends with a couple of cats that live around the corner. The dogs seem to like me but the cats don't. They don't know what they are missing.

I still follow Mommy EVERYWHERE in the house and sometimes she tells me that I can't be under her feet. So, I have to be quick to get out of the way before I trip her. So far, so good.

I will be going for obedience training after Christmas. I come when I am called and walk well on a leash. I am working on sitting, standing and waiting on command. I am looking forward to working on my Canine Good Neighbour certification and then to qualify as a therapy dog. I will let you know how things are going.

Doggie kisses, Ilka, Ilka Noble



Knit Happens

Knitting folk have been busy this fall with items for the Dundas Street Centre Food and Art Fair, the Rowntree Bazaar, the Victoria Hospital Family Birth Centre and NICU as well as some crafting for Christmas. The dedicated knitters and crocheters just keep the needles clicking away and the yarn donation boxes get filled and then distributed and restocked. They are open to any who would like to donate or who are looking for some yarn or needles to work with. Pictures of your creations are happily accepted.



Thanks,

Rev. Wendy (on behalf of Knit Happens)



Upcoming Worship (All services start at 9:30 am unless otherwise stated)

Dec. 10th Second Sunday in Advent.

Dec. 17th: Third Sunday of Advent.

Dec. 24th: Special Christmas service at Dundas Centre at 11 am. With Communion.

Dec. 24th: Christmas Eve service at Rowntree Memorial at 7:30 pm. With Communion.

Dec. 31st: First Sunday after Christmas.

Jan. 7th: Epiphany Service.

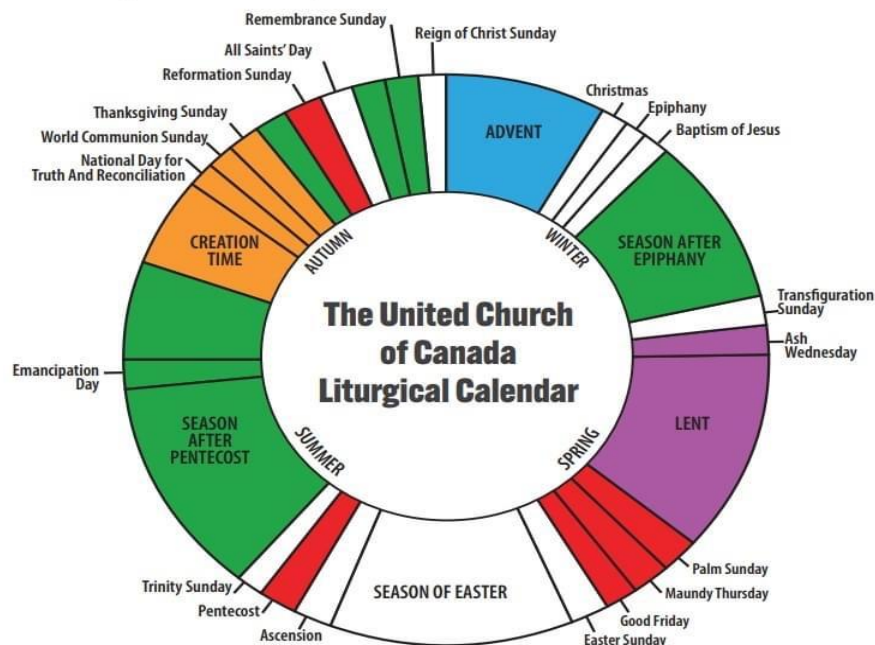
Jan. 14th: Baptism of Jesus Sunday.

Jan. 21st: Third Sunday after Epiphany.

Jan. 28th: Fourth Sunday after Epiphany.

Zoom Worship Services: Start at 9:30 am except Christmas Eve service. *Rev Wendy Noble*

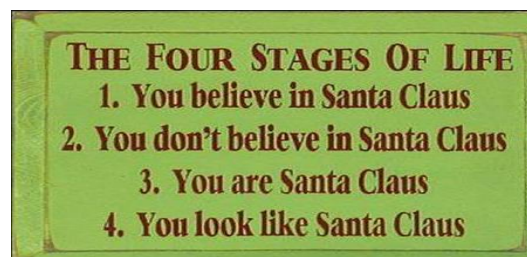
The Christian Calendar: Seasons, Celebrations, and Colours



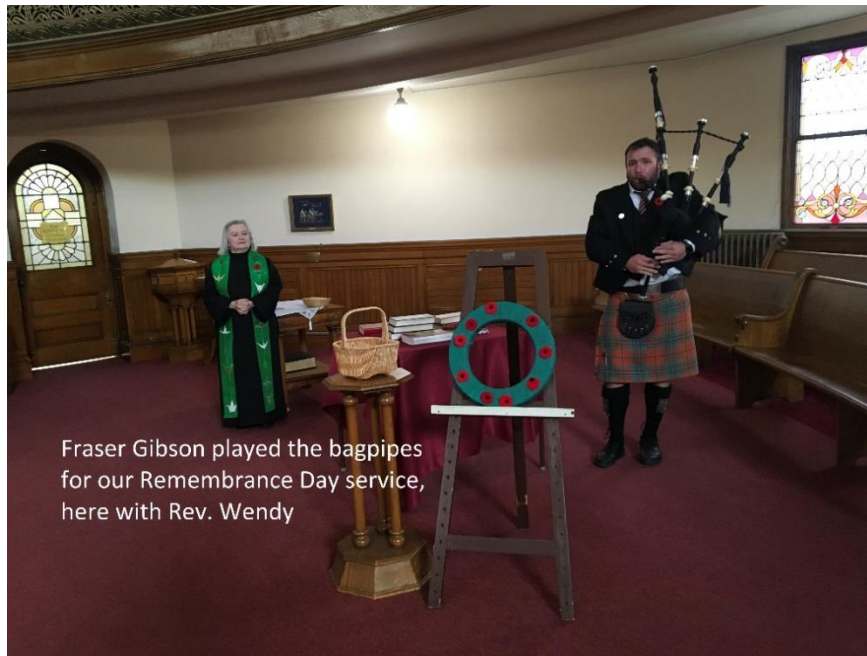
Remit Vote for The United Church

The 44th General Council has authorized a remit on removing structural barriers so that the Indigenous Church can determine its place and structure within the United Church. Rowntree's Board plans on voting on this issue before the end of 2023. More info at

<https://generalcouncil44.ca/news/faqs-about-remit-1-creating-autonomous-national-indigenous-organization> / Brad McMurray



Pictures from our Remembrance Day Service at Dundas St



Fraser Gibson played the bagpipes for our Remembrance Day service, here with Rev. Wendy



Steve Davidson played his Euphonium.



Joint choirs for Remembrance Day Service gave us great music

Rowntree Fundraising on Target to Exceed 2023 Goal

From the Forest City Singers Spring Concert in April ... to the summer jam sessions ... to the September Fall Fling ... to the November 18th Poinsettia Bazaar ... to the December 1st Forest City Singers Christmas Concert, the 2023 fundraising season is wrapping up and is poised to exceed our annual goal of \$5,000.

On Saturday, September 9th, we again participated in the Carling Heights Neighbourhood Yard Sale. This was not a large event but gave us the opportunity to interact with our

community and act as a warm-up to our Poinsettia Bazaar. Our Fall Fling featured baking, books, bargains and a BBQ.

On November 18th, we staged our Poinsettia Bazaar with all sales taking place in the gym. For the first time since Covid interrupted our lives, Joanne Hamilton offered a soup and hot dog lunch in the Friendship Hall. Being one of at least eight

London church bazaars that day meant that business was slow and steady as many people were travelling from church to church. Kudos were received for Glen Thompson's fudge (and piano playing, of course), Rowntree's strawberry jam, and the lunch was "fantastic".





We made a lot of jams and jellies this year ... peach jam, strawberry jam, red pepper jelly, orange marmalade, and apple butter. After the bazaar, we have plenty of jam left for sale. Most are in 250 ml. jars and are \$5.00 per jar. Please contact me if you are interested.

By the time of this reading, the Forest City Singers Christmas Concert “The Magic of Christmas”



will have already taken place. For the first time in several years, the Rowntree concert was scheduled for a Friday evening performance and ticket prices were increased, also for the first time in several years. The Forest City Singers 2024 Spring Concert which was originally scheduled for Friday, April 26th has been rescheduled to Friday, April 19th.

Many thanks to the congregation and all volunteers who helped to make 2023 a successful fundraising year.

Submitted by Maryjane Jolliffe





Over the past fall, East London United Church Outreach (ELUCO), under the expert direction of our full time Community Outreach Worker, Nancy Howard has continued to offer group children's programs and teen & adult workshops in addition to much needed individual counselling and food acquisition/security support.

This fall has been stressful for our Marconi Rent Geared to Income Housing community. Nancy Howard, has noticed an increase in individuals suffering deep depression. While aware of coping strategies, there are times when depression overwhelms and is crippling. Providing time to listen, support and provide counseling for these individuals proves to be an essential and frequent service provided by Nancy Howard. In addition, with the support of a 2023 grant from the Westminster College Foundation, Nancy has received training and has been able to offer small group workshops to teens and parents in the Marconi community on Grief, Addiction, and Mental Health. We are most grateful to the Westminster College Foundation for providing ELUCO with this opportunity.

The Marconi families continue to struggle with the high cost of living and especially the cost of groceries. A high priority this fall was providing assistance with food security through referral to food banks, distribution of grocery gift cards and access to fresh fruit/vegetables through the Harvest Bucks program. On a weekly basis, Nancy obtained bread from the Abundant Life Community Church and surplus meals from the Welcome Wednesday program to distribute at the ELUCO Marconi site. Many children come to the ELUCO unit to obtain breakfast snacks before leaving for school. These food security programs are in high demand to assist families when they are waiting for income but have depleted their monthly eligibility at area food banks. The ELUCO food security programs are an essential part of the services being offered by ELUCO and are greatly appreciated by the Marconi families, children and individuals.

On a positive note, a young adult from the Marconi Community was accepted into the Nursing program at Fanshaw College, Sept, 2023. How exciting! Through ELUCO's Post-Secondary Education Scholarship Fund, this student received \$500 to help with the cost of tuition and college expenses.

ELUCO is incredibly fortunate to have such committed and on-going community and United Church support for its operations, without which we would be unable to function. Rowntree Church raised \$995 for ELUCO's Fall walkathon – Thank-You! Tax Receipts for year-end donors will go to Rowntree for distribution.

Thanks to all at Rowntree who support ELCUO. *Submitted by Judy White*

Rowntree's Christmas Hamper Program

RUC is providing support to those in need at Christmas through the Hamper Program. For the last few years, we have asked for cash donations so that we can purchase grocery store and department store (for children 16 and younger) gift cards. Last year we provided 40 hampers (in addition to the gift cards, they also contained boxes of cookies and knitted goods) as well as gift cards to 17 persons on the waiting list. In total, RUC assisted 68 adults and 20 children at Christmas. The recipients expressed their gratitude as they received their items.

We expect more persons to sign up in November 2023 given the increased use of foodbanks and support services.

We are most grateful for any donation you can make and your donation will be added to your church tax receipt in January.

With sincere gratitude for your donations.

Freda Owen and Phyllis Brady

The World Council of Churches Assembly – A Young Organist's Perspective

Ryan Baxter (rbaxte@uwo.ca)

The World Council of Churches (WCC) is the broadest and most inclusive organization in the modern ecumenical movement. The WCC held its 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe Germany, from August 31 to September 8, 2022, during which all 349 member churches gathered together. With over 4,000 people attending in person, the WCC Assembly is the most diverse Christian gathering of its size in the world. I had the opportunity and pleasure to attend the Assembly through the Ecumenical Stewards Programme. This programme brought over 125 young people from different countries and Christian traditions to



Karlsruhe. At a practical level the stewards assisted with the Assembly's daily operations to ensure everything ran smoothly, but the main reason for our attendance was the Ecumenical Youth Gathering, a four-day meeting of stewards, youth delegates from member churches, and other youth, for conversations, presentations, learning about the ecumenical movement, and dialogue. I attended the gathering and the Assembly with the generous support of the United Church of Canada, which sponsored my attendance there along with three other stewards.

The work of the Assembly is much too broad to summarize in one article (I encourage you to visit the WCC's website to learn more about the many interesting topics discussed at the meeting), so here I will draw out two observations/themes from my experience that I feel relate to our work as organists and church musicians in Canada. Overall, the Assembly was an amazing experience, filled with learning, worship, music, difficult but necessary conversations about the global church's challenges and opportunities, and inspiration for the future.

Firstly, the sharing of worship. Each day of the Assembly began and ended with worship. Each service, with the help of a very dedicated worship team, was designed by a different family of churches. There were services that reflected Anglican, Protestant, Baptist, Orthodox, Lutheran, Evangelical, Mennonite, Methodist, Old-Catholic, Pentecostal, Reformed, and United/Uniting (and more!) traditions. There was something for everyone, and something new to appreciate in all those services. I believe this is something we should strive for in our own work as church musicians in Canada. We will always have the patterns, traditions, and music of our respective denominations to use and honour, but we should aim to provide something for everyone in the congregation when possible. The diversity of our music should reflect the diversity in the congregation. I believe we should strongly consider being a little more ecumenical in what we sing and play, offering something novel or different for listeners and congregants to appreciate. We should draw on the wealth of musical traditions we have access to through our colleagues in other churches, and online.

Secondly, the place of young people in the Church. Quite honestly, a frustrating aspect of the experience was the value placed upon what the Ecumenical Youth Gathering brought forward to the Assembly as our common message. The WCC (and by reflection its individual members churches), does show some serious commitments to incorporating and respecting the views of young people, but there are still gaps between the rhetoric and action to overcome. Much is said about the power of youth to change the world and to change the Church (more than half of the world's population is under 30 years of age), yet the WCC's decision-making body (the Central Committee) currently has only 13% youth representation. In our own work in Canada, do value or devalue the contribution of youth in our churches? As church musicians I believe we offer one of the most important entry points into church life for young people. It is our responsibility not only to attract and support youth, but to advocate for them in our respective communities and denominations, insisting that they truly have a say in the direction of their church. Many youth are very passionate about their churches and the variety of social opportunities and challenges that churches are involved with, but are not given any real influence. However, when they are given the tools necessary to enact change, as was evidenced numerous times at the Assembly, the results are profound.

While the bulk of the WCC's founding churches were European and North American, today most member churches are in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, the Middle East and the Pacific. For its member churches, the WCC is a unique space. It is a place to reflect, speak, act, worship, and work together, a place to challenge and support each other, and a place to

share and debate with each other. I have realized that this is not far removed from what we do as the RCCO. Our vision and mission are more focused of course (inspiring connections with organ music, and promoting a vibrant community that engages all people in the transformative power of the organ and its music), however at its heart and throughout its history, we are actually a very successful ecumenical organization. We challenge and support each other in our work as church musicians and organists, reflect and worship together, and in many ways promote understanding and unity across Christian denominations in Canada. I hope in your own future practices you consider the value of ecumenical-musical experiences, and how you might foster Christian unity in your own communities through programming and music.

VON News

On Thursday, November 23rd, we bade farewell to our VON SMART exercise instructor, Jen, who has secured a full-time position in her chosen field of childcare. I joked that she is trading the “young-at-heart” for the “young-in-years”. As a testament to her fitness level, Jen’s birthday challenge on Wednesday, November 22nd was to successfully bench-press 200 pounds. And she did it!



Figure 1 VON Exercise Class - Guess which one is Jen!

Under Jen’s instruction, attendance at Rowntree VON SMART classes averages about 24 participants every Tuesday and Thursday from 10:30 to 11:30. She will be missed but we wish her all the best. Classes will continue as usual with a new instructor or instructors.



Figure 2 Snowman Craft for November

In-person classes will break for the holiday season from December 25th to January 5th. At Rowntree, the last SMART exercise class before the holiday season will be on Thursday, December 21st and the first class of the new year at Rowntree will be on Tuesday, January 9th, 2024. Also new to the VON SMART exercise classes, registrants are now eligible for a VON SMART membership card which allows lows access to all their exercise classes throughout the City of London.

On Thursdays, the **free** Blood Pressure Clinic continues from 10:00-11:00 with a social hour following the exercise

class from Noon – 1:00. While keeping us busy with bingo, crafts, lunches and other fellowship activities, Julie has become a true friend and supporter of Rowntree. She even attended our Poinsettia Bazaar and took home a prize from the Toonie Table. A monthly calendar is posted on the Brampton Road bulletin board so you can plan ahead to attend these fun activities.

- Submitted by Maryjane Jolliffe




The Tuesday night hospitality meal started at Robinson United in March of 1996 and moved to Rowntree in December of 2010. As of the end of 2022 it had served 83,270 meals!! We thank our volunteers, especially Joanne, who have been so faithful over so many years. /Brad McMurray





Figure 3 The Forest City Singers annual Christmas Concert Dec 1, 2023- always an amazing show!



The Acorn  is published by the Communications Committee of Rowntree Memorial United Church and edited by Brad McMurray. Articles for the next edition are due March 22, 2024. Comments or articles can be emailed to wbmcmurray55@hotmail.com or left in the Communications mail slot at Rowntree. Stories are much more effective with pictures, as ‘*a picture is worth a thousand words*’, so please try to include a picture.