

Grace's Chatter – Christmas Edition 2022



"Christmas is Generosity in Action, Even in the Midst of Scarcity!"

Dear Grace United Church,

Would you believe me if I told you this year marks our third Advent season together?

I cannot believe it. It feels like it was just yesterday the very first Sunday I led worship celebration at Grace – that was Nov. 15, 2020. It is a shocking reality. Sometimes I sense, just because COVID-19 enforced us to stay home and be safe, not just for ourselves but for all those we love and care for, life still went on. The world kept on spinning, bills kept on demanding payments, churches

got out of their comfort zones and started streaming online worship services created in our living rooms, kitchens, dining rooms and our outdoor decks. Why did we do what we did, and we are continuing to do things virtually still as well? So that people can enjoy worship celebrations in the comfort and the safety of their homes.

In a twisted way, COVID-19 has offered us gifts we were not aware that we can use. What "New Things" have you discovered about yourself, or others among your family and friends? What new gifts did you find out you have, and you can offer to others?

Beloved, we are so fortunate to have a Community of Faith who can truly look beyond the darkness around us and walk together gently and sincerely. At Grace United, we continue to do our best through the Perfect Love of God. We know we are NOT perfect, but God's Love is. We continue our weekly worship celebrations on Sundays at 10:30 a.m. Not only are there more people attending, but thanks to our volunteers, we also have live-streaming on our YouTube channel. Because of COVID-19, we have turned to Zoom for our Book Study Group V.I.B.E. (Venturing in Biblical Education), we will conclude this book on Dec. 21, 2022 - "Learning to Walk in the Dark" by The Rev. Dr. Barbara Brown Taylor. On Dec. 3, we had our very first Christmas Market since 2019 – This was my very first Christmas Market ever with Grace, as your incumbent minister.

It was a glorious gift to meet friends that I have never met before. From the people coming to shop to the vendors, it was truly a blessing to meet many people.

Often, we think that we have nothing to offer financially, but then God brings forth a new way for us to give. In October, a friend of mine tagged me on a Facebook post that Sam Crosby, a wonderful teacher at Gan. Secondary School was looking for a safe space for LGBTQ+ Youth to gather. This is a once-a-month gathering where Food, Fun and Fellowship is the key. To make a long story short, I have met with Ms. Crosby and have planned our once-a-month gatherings up to June 2023. Yes, we may not have the human resources to run a safe space for youth, but we do have the building to accommodate those who are looking for such a space.

One of my deep desires in being a minister is to work with Youth, and Young Adults, and the other is to work with all seniors, especially those who feel alone and lonely. Yes, you read that right - I love working with people at ALL stages of life, and I keep on remembering the words of Apostle Paul who says (First Corinthians 9), and I paraphrase, I become everything for everyone so that I can save some. Yes, we cannot reach every single person on this earth, but we can do our part with one person at a time.

Beloved, as you prepare for Christmas and the New Year, would you focus on God's Generosity amid scarcity? Give and you shall receive, receive, and share abundantly with all.

May we live to make this world a better place, at Christmas and ALWAYS.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Blessed, Healthy & Happy New Year.

Your Servant-Leader,

Rev. Takouhi Demirdjian-Petro B.A., B.Th., M.Div.



Grace United Church Holiday Office Hours & Service Schedule

The church Office will be closed from 1pm on Friday, December 23rd to 8:00 am, Tuesday, January 3rd

- **Blue Christmas Service – Tuesday, December 20th at 7:00pm** (See poster on Back)
- **Christmas Eve Service, December 24th at 7:00pm**
- **Christmas Day Service, December 25th at 10:30 am** (See poster on Back)
- **January 1, 2023 – No Live Service in the Church**
- **January 8th, 2023 – Woship Service 10:30 am. Leader, Rev. Takouhi**

UCW celebrate 60 years of service at Grace

By Denise Wood

On September 25, Grace United Church marked the 60th anniversary of United Church Women (UCW) in Canada.

With the assistance of Reverend Takouhi, members of Grace United UCW led a service celebrating the work and contributions made by women of our congregation over many years. The service included prayers and readings taken from the Service held at Grace when the UCW was formed in January 1962.

In 1960 other groups such as the Women's Aide Society and Women's Missionary Society joined and became the United Church Women.

During the service prayers were offered for past, current and future members. The names of several of the Charter members were read.

As usual, members of UCW provided sweets, coffee and tea following the Service.

Archival material including minutes and lists of members from the early years were displayed for the congregation to review.



Front row l to r: Shirley Walker, Denise Wood, Linda Brooks, Marg Worth, Christina Gordon-Charney, Diane Nuttall. Back row: Vicki Leakey, Rev. Takouhi, Rhea Nuttall, Shirley Clark

Session Looks to Increase Community Reach

By Barb Jenkins

We have been busy preparing for the Christmas season.

A team of dedicated volunteers did a great job decorating the church sanctuary with Cheryl O'Leary making lovely new bows for the wreaths.

We will look for some helpers to take everything down on January 9 at 10am.

There are 3 special Advent services planned: **Blue Christmas** Dec 20th (see attachment), **Christmas Eve** at 7pm and **Christmas Day**, Dec 25th at 10:30. This will be a casual service in the sanctuary with coffee and muffins. Please join us. There will be no in-person service on Sunday, January 1st. Rev. Takouhi's *Bread for the Journey* will be broadcast on Youtube and Cogeco.

Rev Takouhi has recorded a message for MyFM on the True Meaning of Christmas.

Our outreach continues with **the Red Wagon** collections during December for the Gananoque Food Bank. Monetary donations received through **Grace's White Gift** program will help purchase hampers for their clients for the holidays. Both the number of users of the Food Bank has increased by approximately 30% and we can all appreciate the increase in the cost of food needed to fill each hamper.

Our Sharing and Caring committee sent "Thinking of You" cards to all residents of Carveth and Fox Run retirement homes. Your Session members felt that there were many isolated seniors who would welcome the contact.

Session has been communicating with Mayor John Beddows about **helping the homeless in Gananoque**, including support for possible warming centres. We are also working with the local police services to provide emergency grocery cards.

At Grace United, we are working become more inclusive and making our facilities more attractive for community use. In that regard, we have rentals this month for a **family get-together**, a concert in the sanctuary by the **Gananoque Choral Society**, as well as **the Pentecostal Church** using our kitchen. There is also a **new LGBTQ youth group** from the high school starting to use our facilities regularly. Christina Kaya recently put on a very successful family magic show, **The Nunny Bag**, and we hope to see more of the same in the future.

We have purchased United Church pins for our congregation. These will be available the back of the church where a donation will be collected if you wish to help cover the cost.

In conclusion, Grace United Session is initiating conversation with our Eastern Ontario Outaouais Regional Council about long term visioning for alternate uses for our building spaces. We hope to have an open conversation on this topic at the congregational meeting in the New Year. Please give this some thought.

Christmas Market is a roaring success!

By Denise Wood

After a long Covid hiatus Grace United Church held a very successful Christmas Market on Saturday December 3rd.

Several vendors displayed and sold items from knitting, sweets, woodcrafts, Tupperware , Rev T's Poetry Books and so much more!

Grace's Café offered a delicious lunch for sale which included homemade soups, sandwiches and of course our famous homemade pies.

Pies for God Sake sold A LOT of pie and the Bake Table was a hit as well. The silent auction and raffle was very popular and we thank everyone for bidding on our variety of baskets. We also want to thank all individuals and businesses that provided items for the baskets and raffle items.

It was a very successful fundraiser for the Church, raising over \$5500. Our expenses were very low because so much was donated by our amazing congregation for our lunch and bake table.

As mentioned, it was a successful fundraiser but more importantly a wonderful day of fun, food and fellowship and a great community outreach with over 200 people attending.

There are too many people to thank individually but without the help of so many this day would not have been the success it was.

We will be meeting soon to review the day and start our planning for Next Year's Market.



Pies and Tourtieres “flew of the shelves”

By Paul Scott

A big shout out goes to the faithful Grace Church pie makers and to all those faithful customers who purchased pies and tourtieres at the Christmas Market on December 3.

“Our pie makers meet about twice a month and we had close to 200 fruit pies for the Christmas Market,” Carol Currie said. “When the Market opened, we were inundated with folks arriving to pick up their pies.”

The group also made some mincemeat pies and tourtieres. There were orders for the 60 tourtieres before the event started. “And we are still getting calls,” Ms. Currie said.

The Pies For God’s Sake group has expanded to about 15. But the thing that keeps them going is that they enjoy working together. “We enjoy the fellowship and we all work well together. We have other volunteers from outside our own church community who have joined our group,” she said. “We have quite the assembly line going on pie day.”

And the donations just keep rolling in. Diane Nuttall makes and donates all the crumble for the apple pies. This year Wallbridges donated all the mincemeat for the 15 pies while others donate money for supplies, their time and pie making skills.

“When it comes to cooking up large batches of tourtiere filling, there is no one better than Peggy Delaney,” Carol said. She can figure out exactly what is needed to fill those 60 pies.

The Pies for God’s Sake crew will be taking a well deserved break through the winter months, but come Spring they will be back in the Grace Church kitchen doing what they love to do – making Pies for God’s Sake.



The Nunny Bag Show delights children of all ages

With Christina Kaya



On November 19th a fundraiser was held for Grace Church on stage in the auditorium. On the first snowy day of the season, Christina Kaya performed "The Nunny Bag Show", a collection of stories, poems, songs and magic! It was well received!

After the show, children did special, magical crafts and everyone enjoyed beverages and baked goodies. Special thanks go to Denise Wood for organizing the event, Vicki Leakey, members of U.C.W. and Stewards as well as McKenty for their help in making the post-show activities such a success!

While the show is primarily for children K-6, it is a family show that adults can enjoy for the humour and meaning behind the scenes. The hilarious song, "Three Little Pigs", was featured on Barbra Streisand's first album and "The Rain Hat" and "The Wise Old Woman and the Butterflies" are touching metaphors for life.

Did you know?

After completing the theatre program at the University of British Columbia, Christina was cast in film, plays, and musicals, including Guys and Dolls, West Side Story and Gypsy. She then turned to children's theatre as it combined her love of fantasy, music and magic. In 1986 she performed at the Vancouver Children's Festival where she saw the first one-ring tent show of Cirque du Soleil. After moving back to Toronto, Christina appeared on the "Mr. Dressup Show" for two seasons, with Casey and Finnegan and of course, Mr. Dressup.

Despite the snow, the show was well attended. Watch out for the "Nunny Bag Show" this spring when Christina will again bring her stories, poems, songs and magic to Grace Church!



Honouring 14 Precious Lives at Ecole Polytechnique

By Paul Scott

Tuesday, December 6 in Canada is the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. In 1989, at the Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal, 14 young women were killed solely because they were women studying the sciences.

At our worship service on December 4, Rev. Takouhi offered a moment of silence and lifted our hearts to God's Love and Mercy. A candle was lit for each of these women and their names were read aloud in a short, impressive ceremony.

"We honour the precious lives of these 14 women who were killed 33 years ago," Rev. Takouhi said. "And we also remember all the women of the world who are murdered and missing."

Then she related her personal memory of this tragic event.

"I can never erase this horrific event from my heart and mind, as I had just entered Canada only three years before this took place.

I still hear my mother's voice, 'We ran away from the bombs in Lebanon for this?' but I also continue saying, 'However, God promises to never leave us nor forsake us – even if human beings kill each other out of jealousy, greed and distrust'."

In conclusion, Rev. Takouhi reminded, "let us remember their names and bring change to this world of divisions for different reasons. United, let us carry each other with love and teach our children how to live in Equality, Peace and Harmony."

The names of the 14 women killed at Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal were then read out.

Geneviève Bergeron.	Hélène Colgan
Nathalie Croteau	Barbara Daigneault
Anne-Marie Edward	Maud Haviernick
	Barbara Klucznik-Widajewicz,
Maryse Laganière	Maryse Leclair
Anne-Marie Lemay	Sonia Pelletier
Michèle Richard	Annie St-Arneault
	Annie Turcotte

And All Missing and Murdered women in the world.



Your gifts help us to keep on giving

By Vicki Leakey, treasurer

2022 has been another year with challenges. But overall, we have so enjoyed the ability to feel free to increase our numbers by attending a Sunday service in person. Families can come wearing a mask with the ability to sit a safe distance should that be their wish; we have many on a Sunday morning both with or without masks and respecting each other's caution for safety. The congregation at Grace United Church believes that generosity for others is a priority and the funding raised for local outreach, Mission and Service etc. is a testament to the work this church family strives to attain when raising funds to help others. As of November, 2022, we were able to provide support for the following initiatives:

Local outreach to provide cards, literature and visits to families in the area - \$2116

Haiti Donations of help - \$1115

Local Grace Missions to assist various community groups such as the Food Bank, toys for kids, clothing for kids, Linklater Breakfast Club and others -\$695

Facility Support for the Community Kitchen to promote fun with meal prep and good meals.

Refugee Donations to support Ukrainian families coming to our area - \$2981

Mission and Service to assist various international needs around us -\$15,877

Our 2023 budget for revenue and expenses is coming in at \$233,470 in total which is about at 4% decrease. We are optimistic that the repairs and maintenance required in 2021 and 2022 will help reduce some of those costs into next year. Our hope for 2023 is that we will see an increase in offerings thereby reducing the need to pull money from our Trust Funds. However, this community of faith continues to be strong to meet our operating needs as well as look out for those around us.

One of our successes in the current year that deserves recognition is the effort made from our Grace United Church pie making group. We were able to raise \$4,687 to help fund our various needs from this group that worked diligently to find the best cost for fruit and other supplies. This year they also prepared tourtiere pies for the holiday season and they were basically sold out the week they were finished.

Blessings to those who continue to provide the necessary financial support to our church. There is much thought about how we can reach the needs locally and abroad and your monetary gifts enable us to make a difference. We have several Offerings'

options available for those that may not attend the Sunday Service but wish to support the many programs with which Grace United Church is involved. **E-transfer** from your on-line bank account is popular; you can look for “send an e-transfer” on your on line banking website and send to grace.gan@outlook.com. Just follow the instructions given. **Offerings by mail** is another option – send by mail to Grace Church at 120 Pine St. Gananoque, On K7G 1C7.

As church treasurer, I am humbled with the effort and activity that so many of our church family bring to the congregation as they continue to look for ways to use our facility to assist the many groups in the area looking for access to our great kitchen, or the space of our large auditorium. With rising costs for young families and seniors, 2023 appears to be looking like a hard financial year, but I have no doubt our faith will help each of us reach out however possible be it time to assist with an outreach lunch, financially as able or other gifted talents that keep our faith alive and well!

Wishing everyone a safe, healthy and Merry Christmas and a sincere thank you to all that have given Grace United Church your time and finances that allow us to stay strong operationally as well as reach out to help others in our community and abroad.



Dear Grace United Church Family,

Sister Joan Chittister is one of my very favourite theologians of our time. She is a woman of Courage and Commitment to make this world a better place. Therefore, I share this article from Sister Joan with you.

Blessings,

Rev. Takouhi

Peace? On Earth?¹

by: Sister Joan Chittister

from the Monastic Way

“Glory to God in Heaven, and upon earth peace...”

—Luke 2:14

Christmas songs are blaring over loudspeakers in every store you enter. The gift boxes are heaping up. Everybody’s saying it: “Christmas blessings ... God bless you at Christmas time ... Christmas peace to you and yours ... Merry Christmas.” But is there any truth at all to any of this manufactured joy? Or is this, at best, nothing more than an exercise in auto-suggestion: Say it often enough and you’ll think it’s true, whatever the facts to the contrary.

Christians, after all, at least from one perspective, live a very split life. As Paul puts it in one of his letters to the fragile communities of the early church, “Your standards should be different than those around you.” But at Christmas time, those standards can get terribly confusing. The Christian standard says that Christ, our Peace, has been born. But look around you. The other standard, the real public norm, the front page of our daily newspapers, says that there is no such thing as peace anywhere. Instead, we have mass murder in countries we are unfamiliar with and blood baths we have created in Baghdad and Kabul.

So, are we simply kidding ourselves when we put up manger scenes in our public parks, and weigh our churches down with bark-covered, life-size crèches, and decorate the crib sets under our Christmas trees? Will the world ever really come to peace? In fact, is there really any such thing as peace? And, most of all, what do we have to do with it. What are we singing about? Is all of this so-called feast nothing more than a too stark reminder that Karl Marx was right, that religion really is “the opium of the people,” the sedative we sell to help people either to help them survive the worst or to help them deny it?

¹ <https://joanchittister.org/~joanchit/content/newsletters/monastic-way/current-issue - December 7, 2022>

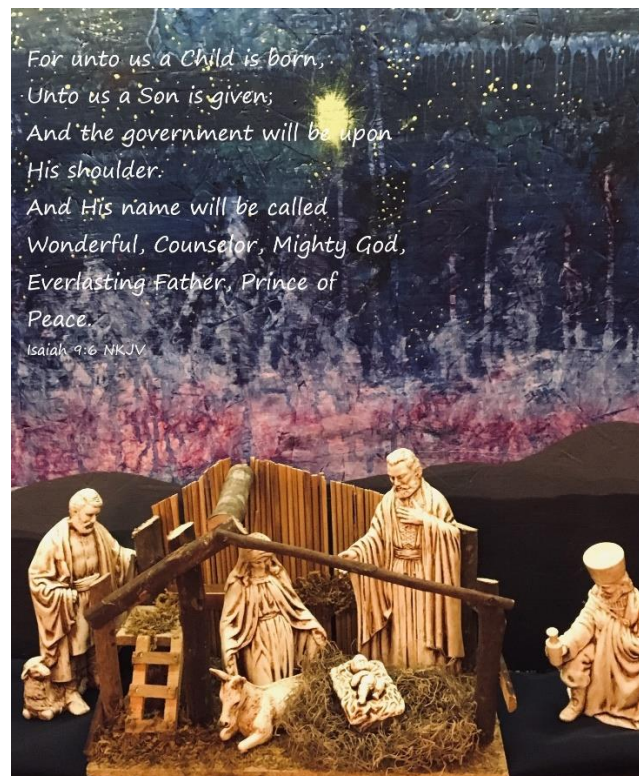
Neither, really.

If anything, it is living proof that there is such a thing as “peace”—and then there is peace.

One kind of peace is a state of life that is free from chaos and turbulence, from violence and institutionally legitimated death. That kind of peace happens often enough in history to show us that such a thing is possible. But don't be fooled: that kind of peace can be achieved as easily through force as well as through justice. In that case, little is gained by it.

But there is another kind of peace. This kind of peace does not come either from the denial of evil or the acceptance of oppression. This kind comes from the center of us and flows through us like a conduit to the world around us.

This kind of peace is the peace of those who know truth and proclaim it, who recognize oppression and refuse to accept it, who understand God's will for the world and pursue it. This kind of peace comes with the realization that it is our obligation to birth it for the rest of the world so that what the manglers and crèches and crib sets of the world point to can become real in us—and because of us—in our own time. That is the kind of Christmas peace we must ourselves seek to be. Then “Merry Christmas” will really mean something.



St. Nicholas and Santa Claus and Christmas traditions

By Paul Scott

Every wonder how Santa Claus became part of the Christmas tradition? What's the North Pole and Bethlehem have to do with each other! It seems they are poles apart! Well I came across some info recently which I found interesting.

Back a few years ago, as in 1,752 years ago to be exact, Nicholas of Myra was born on March 15, 270 A. D. in Patara-Lycia in Asia Minor which today is the country of Turkey. His father was a very successful merchant and trader and the family became very wealthy. But Nicholas, who was brought up a Christian, led a simple life devoted to God and in service to the poor and needy. He was ordained a priest at the age of 21 and it is said that as a young man he made a pilgrimage to Palestine and Egypt to study in the school of the Desert Fathers.

Upon returning, Nicholas was ordained Bishop of Myra, which is now Demre, on the coast of modern day Turkey. He was imprisoned during the Great Persecution of Christians under the Roman Emperor Diocletian who ruled between 284 – 305 A. D. He was released in 306 A. D. when Emperor Constantine the Great came to power and made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire.

Nicholas' parents, Theophanes and Nona, died in an epidemic while he was a young man. As an only child, he inherited the family fortune and obeying Jesus' words to "sell what you own and give to the poor," Nicholas used his whole inheritance to assist the needy, sick and suffering.

The whole tradition of Christmas presents came from St. Nicholas' habit of giving gifts to people in secret. One of the most famous stories of the generosity says he tossed little bags of gold coins through an open window in the house of a less fortunate family to serve as dowry (a wedding gift) for the three daughters, who otherwise would have been forced into prostitution.

And about the tradition of hanging stockings on the fireplace? The story is related that during one of his secret acts of generosity, some gold coins landed in the family's shoes which were drying near the fire ... and presumably their stockings were also hung by the fire to dry. This became the tradition of hanging up stockings on Christmas Eve so they could be filled with surprises and treats. And we are still doing it 1677 years later!

St. Nicholas died on December 6, 343 A. D. at the age of 75. In many European countries December 6 is celebrated as the feast day of St. Nicholas of Myra. His selfless acts of giving gifts to those less fortunate became associated with his name which in Dutch was translated as **Sinterklaas**, and who we know as Santa Claus, aka Saint Nick.

The red suit, weight gain, the reindeer, sleigh and North Pole were all fun fantasy facts that came along much later... **But the Spirit of Giving, which is also a Christmas tradition, was based on a real person who lived during the 3rd century A.D. – St. Nick.**

With information gleaned from Faith United Church Noticings, Courtice, Ont. Rev. Takouhi and of course, the internet.

Birthdays and Anniversaries

To those celebrating in December, January, February, and March

Happy Birthday to all those who are celebrating over the next few months, including; Denise, Catherine, Steve, Paul, Bonnie, Edna, Carol, Vicki, Tom, Gayle, Cliff, Mary, Merna, Gary, Cecile, Peter, Helen, Gary, Tim, Connie, Dianne, Marilyn, Colleen, Mary, Diane & Gillian.

Happy Anniversary; Brian & Linda, Dave & Joan, and Ron & Mary.

Plans are underway for the Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper, February 21, 2023

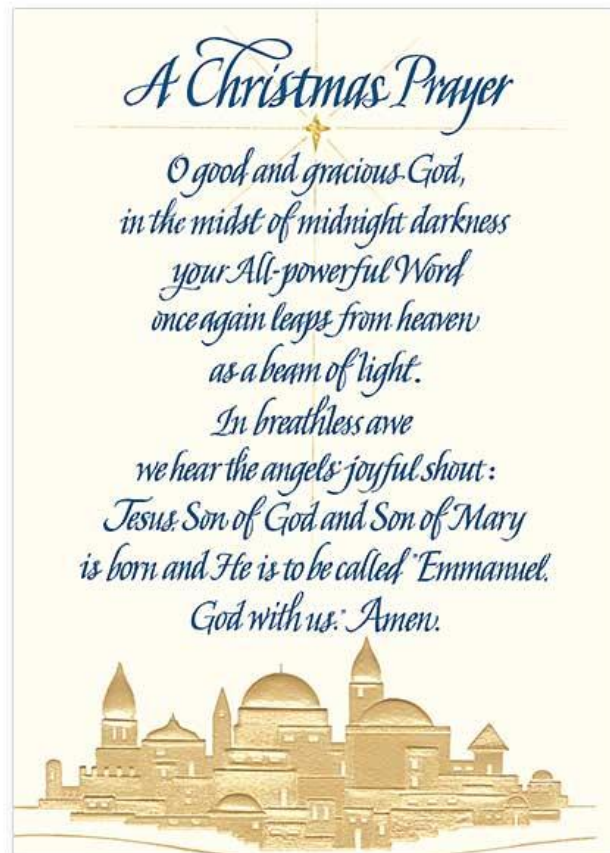
Mark your calendars and stay tuned

Contributors this month

Reverend Takouhi, Barb Jenkins, Denise Wood, Chirstina Kaya, Vicki Leakey, Sister Joan Chittister, Laurie Cadue, Paul Scott.

Next News Letter Spring Deadline or Articles: **Friday, March 24, 2023**

*Merry Christmas & Happy New Year
to all our Grace Church Family.*



DECEMBER 25, 2022

10:30 A.M.

"Christmas with Jammies"



Grace United Church
(120, Pine Street, Gananoque, ON)

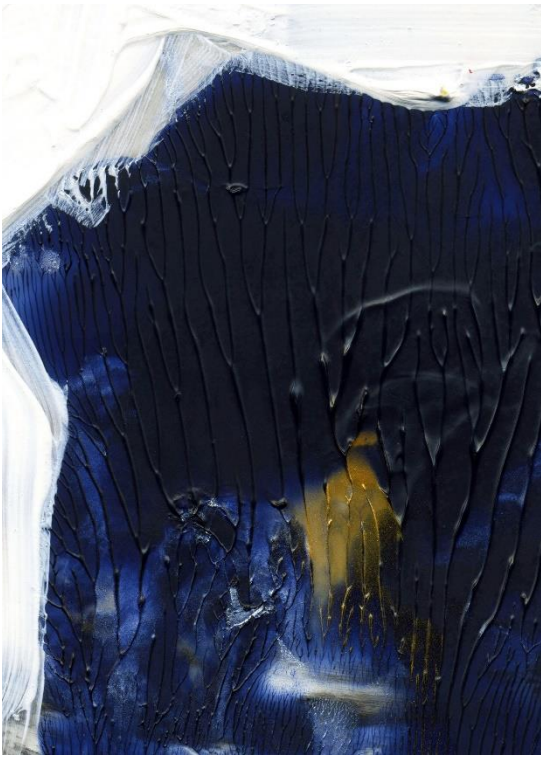
All are welcome

**Church of the
Christmas Morning -
Come celebrate
Jesus' birth with
your jammies
Casual Worship
Celebration with
Carols, Christmas
Stories, Cupcakes
& Cookies**

Come Celebrate the Birth of Jesus

Bring your own favourite non-alcoholic beverage





DECEMBER 20, 2022

7:00 P.M.

"Blue Christmas"

Grace United Church
(120, Pine Street, Gananoque, ON)

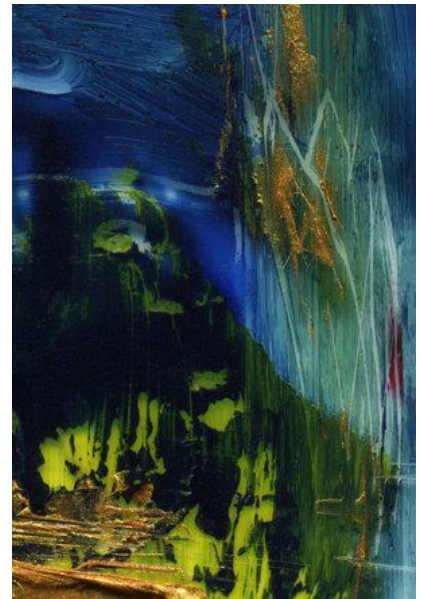
All are welcome.

Not everyone is up to cheery Christmas Season. People face different situations at different times of life. If you have said goodbye to a loved one, or grieving any other situation, you are invited to Grace United.

Attend this gathering to take time to breathe in Love and Exhale Gratitude - reflect upon the Heart of Christmas, which is **Hope** in the middle of hardships; **Peace** in the middle of chaos; **Joy** in the middle of grief; and **Love** in the middle of loneliness.

Our guest, is world renowned, speaker and author, **Eleanor Glenn - "How Love Continues"**. A Few Copies of this book will be available, and ALL proceeds will be donated to the Benevolent Fund of Grace United Church.

Join us as you are. We will name our losses and remember those whom we have loved and lost from this physical world. Take time to reflect upon the Spirit of Christmas and the True light of Christ. And be reminded that there is Life even in the longest night.



The Offertory Gifts from this evening will go to the BENEVOLENT FUND. Grace United Ministry that reaches beyond the walls of the church building.

Artwork by: Jan Richardson - <https://www.janrichardson.com>