

## Christmas Angel Line

***Arise, shine; for your light has come, and  
the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.***

Isaiah 60:1

I just finished putting up my outdoor Christmas lights. Every year I dangle precariously from the ladder, extending my reach with a straw broom to entwine the lights in the trees. I jab myself with pine needles arranging the strings in a decorative fashion, and I risk trips to the Emergency Room with my use of the staple gun. Why? Because without the lights it just wouldn't seem like Christmas.

On these dark nights when there is almost as much night time as day time, the lights serve as a beacon calling me home. It doesn't surprise me that when the early Christian church was trying to pick a date to celebrate the birth of Jesus, they chose the 25<sup>th</sup> of December. Some scholars believe the church chose this date to compete with a Roman festival – Saturnalia – that already took place that day. While that is probably historically accurate, the poet in me thinks the church chose this day because we know in our hearts that the birth of Jesus brings light to our darkened world. What better time to celebrate the birth of this light than on a day close to the winter solstice when the darkness is slowly being replaced by a new dawn.

The message of God's love that Jesus embodied, his compassionate embrace of all who needed loving acceptance, and his challenge to those who used power in unjust and unhealthy ways, continue to brighten the darkened corners of our lives and our world.

Once again this year our leaders have been busy preparing for this season of Advent when we celebrate the light of Jesus coming to our world. The Worship and Music Committee has been planning services that we hope will be meaningful to us all as we journey to Bethlehem. The musically gifted among us have been preparing special music to uplift our spirits. The Outreach Committee continues to inspire us to share the light of Christ with the children in South Africa as we raise money to help build a daycare for AIDS orphans. Be sure to see the back of this letter for a full listing of the activities offered this Advent and please use the fridge magnet for easy reference!

My hope is that the light of Christ shining from our worship and our outreach will be like a beacon drawing you home to church for this season of Advent and Christmas. Wishing you all a blessed Christmas and a light filled New Year.

**Julia**

## STRATHROY UNITED CHURCH ADVENT PROJECT: "TREE OF HOPE"

Strathroy United Church is creating a "Tree of Hope" for the children of Wattville, South Africa as we continue to raise funds for Kare for Kids to help build a new Daycare Centre for children affected by AIDS. Please choose the gift you would like to give for our 'Tree of Hope':

- A gift of \$10 will light a Christmas bulb.
- A gift of \$20 or more will purchase a Christmas ball for our tree.

Balls could be purchased in memory of a loved one if you wish.



## CHRISTMAS MEMORIALS

This year the Worship & Music committee will not be coordinating the Memorial Poinsettia's but rather requesting that people make a donation to be directed to the 'Tree of Hope' and/or the Salvation Army Food Bank. This is to help respond to the great need in both our community and in the world. Should you still wish to place flowers on your own, we ask that they be unscented to help all with allergies. We would ask that the flowers be placed in the Church on December 23 and taken with you after the Christmas Eve service.



## Advent and Christmas Services

**Advent 2 – 4 December** – We will continue our journey to Bethlehem through listening once more to the words of the nativity from Luke's gospel. Don't forget the Scott Woods' concert at 2:30. Tickets are still available at the church office.

**Advent 3 – 11 December** – Our White Gift Sunday helps us to reach out to others in this season of love and compassion. Please join us in bringing gifts of food and toys to be given to the Salvation Army and the Rural Women's Resource Centre. Special music will also be provided by our children.

**Advent 4 – 18 December** – Come and listen to the uplifting music of our Senior Choir as they present the cantata: *Child of Hope – A Christmas Message of Encouragement and Peace*.

**Longest Night – 21 December – 7:00 p.m.** - At this service we acknowledge that Christmas can be a difficult time because of loss and grief. On this longest night of the year, we will remember the people we love who have died. If you would like a candle lit in memory of someone, please call the church office by Friday 16 December so that we can prepare enough candles to be lit during the service."

**Christmas Eve – 24 December – 7:00 p.m.** Please join us as we re-enact the Christmas story, listen to special music, sing familiar Christmas hymns, celebrate communion, and feel the light of Christ. Anyone interested in being a shepherd, angel or wise person, please talk to Julia.

**Christmas Day** – Based on the results of our Congregational survey, there will be no service of worship on Christmas Day.

**New Year's Day – 1 January – 9:30 a.m.** – Bring your contribution to the potluck breakfast as we worship around the breakfast table. This will be a time of reflecting on the year that has past, looking forward to the year to come.

