

Rev. Takouhi's Reflection-Advent-Christmas 2024

"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

Hebrews 11:1 (NRSV)



Dear Grace United Church,

What does this verse have to do anything with Advent and Christmas, you ask.

My answer is **everything**.

My thoughts go back to January 5, 2005, the first day of my journey to become an ordained minister through the United Church of Canada. I had to complete my Bachelor of Arts (B.A.), before I could attempt to earn my Master of Divinity (M.Div.). The Journey began at Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec.

I remember clearly one of the professors, Marie-France Dion, sharing with us the differences that are found in the Bible about identical stories that had different details, and I was so heartbroken that this theology class was guiding me and other students on not taking the Bible literally. For the 38 years of my life, I have been taught that the Bible is infallible as it is God's Breath. In Armenian, besides referring to the Bible as the **Holy Book (Sourp-Keerk)**, we also refer to it as **God's Breath (Asdvadza-Shouch)**.

This Course, Introduction to the Hebrew Bible, was one of my first three courses I had registered for to begin my journey in obtaining a B.A. majoring in Theological Studies and minoring in English Literature. I turned to my classmate Andrew, and said: "Are they trying to brainwash us that the Bible is not **perfect?**" Andrew, who was at the end of his theological studies, gently said, "Takouhi, if everything is perfect and literal, **what part will Faith play?**" Almost 20 years after that conversation, I still remember those words as well as my memory serves.



Beloved, Grace United Church, this is my last Newsletter Reflection for you as your Spiritual Leader, and I want to invite you to consider and reconsider over and over again that **Faith is the foundation of the Church**, that is why she is referred to as **Community of Faith**.



Every year, Advent helps us journey through four important elements of life – **Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love, helping us arrive to Christmas.** I have learned that these four are truly the **pillars of life** – which are important to our daily living.

This Advent is a little bit harder to fathom all the heartache in the world. Where the rich seem to get richer and the poor, the marginalized are getting pushed away, literally, killed, tortured with weapon

of destruction, and many politicians are buying their way into political positions, just because they can. But I am also reminded that these problems were there at the time of First Advent and Christmas. As difficult as it is to see the children crying for their parents, parents crying for holding their dead children in their arms and crying, in the rubble of Ukraine, Gaza, Lebanon, and many other places, which we do not hear on the news cycle, The Spirit keeps on reminding me to hold on to the four pillars of Advent that leads us to Christmas – **Hope, Peace, Joy and Love**; and the cord that connects all these four pillars together is **Faith and Faith Alone.**

Four-plus years ago, if anyone told me that I will be changing my pastoral relations from Grace to Trinity as of January 1, 2025, I would have laughed, like Sarah did when she overheard one of the three visitors tell Abraham that Sarah will have a son the following year. I would have laughed as well. But I kept on searching my heart within God's heart to see with the eyes of my soul – Faith.



Like Mary and Joseph were visited by Angel Gabriel. As frightened as they were, they still took a leap of faith. Even the shepherds, no matter how scared they were when the symphony of Angels appeared and gave the Good News, they were frightened. Anything and Everything New is frightening at times, but the end results are Glorious and Beautiful.

You know the rest of the story. Soon after the visit of the Magi, Joseph was visited by an angel again and told to go back where his ancestors had left, Egypt, so that King Herod would not kill this King of Kings and Prince of Peace.

Beloved Grace United, do not be afraid to go where God is calling you to go. Hold on to Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love, which are held together with the cord of Faith. No matter how thin and skimpy that cord may look like, but Faith does not need to be big and mighty, but the smallest amount of Faith who Trusts the



Mighty Love of God can do Great things. Not just for ourselves but for the entire world, from the little corners of our lives. Be Blessed as you bless others and remember, God is with you Through it All. As I anticipate my 57th birthday, (Nov. 18), I think of this wonderful song that the Grace United Church Choir sings beautifully, and I invite you to Hold on to Faith, and Trust the One who has brought you this far and who promises to see you through.

“Through It All” - by Andrae Crouch (1972)

I've had many tears and sorrows,
I've had questions for tomorrow,
there've been times I didn't know
right from wrong.
But in every situation,
God gave me blessed consolation,
that my trials come to only make me strong.

Chorus:

Through it all,
through it all,
I've learned to trust in Jesus,
I've learned to trust in God.
Through it all,
through it all,
I've learned to depend upon His Word.

I've been to lots of places
I've seen a lot of faces,
there's been times I felt so all alone.
But in my lonely hours,
yes, those precious lonely hours,
Jesus lets me know that I was His own

Chorus

I thank God for the mountains,
and I thank Him for the valleys,
I thank Him for the storms
He brought me through.
For if I'd never had a problem,
I wouldn't know God could solve them,
I'd never know what faith in God could
do

I remain humbly God's Servant-Daughter – Because of Grace,

Rev. Takouhi Demirdjian-Petro

B.A., B.Th., M.Div.



United Church Women and Kniffy Knitters, hard at work

By Denise Wood

For the past number of years, the UCW have been blessed to have Cheryl O'Leary create beautiful cards that our UCW members made and sent out to shut ins. With Cheryl's passing, we were not sure how we were going to proceed this year. Then along came another angle. Susan Barwell stepped in and helped our crafty group to create the cards pictured below. We are eternally grateful to both of these lovely ladies. The cards made are sent out to the residents at Carverth Care Center, Foxrun and members of our Church family in the community.



Our Kniffy Knitters knit over 70 Pairs of mitts and hats to be sent to the communities of Moose Factory and Adawapiskat in the North.

Our group continues to knit comfort blankets and winter hats and mitts for our local community as well



Farewell luncheon set for Sunday, Dec. 15th

By Barb Jenkins

With Rev. Takouhi starting her new call in Smiths Falls on January 1, Official Board is organizing a farewell luncheon for her on Sunday, December 15th after church. Hot Roast Company will be doing the catering. They did an awesome job for our Anniversary lunch. Session is helping out and can use helpers for setup Saturday morning and/or takedown on Sunday.

Session has undertaken to organize lay worship leaders to look after providing services starting January 5th and for up to 6 months. By that time we hope to have a permanent plan in place which may include partnering with other churches in the area. In order to keep our community of faith vibrant and sustainable, there will be lots of opportunities to help out. Please do what you can because we all have to work together.

Tuesday the 26th at 1pm, the Scotts are heading a group to decorate the church for Advent. We will need a crew to dismantle the displays on Tuesday, January 7th at 10am. We are still looking for ushers as we have 6 services in December including Christmas Eve. On the December 29th there will be a casual Shower for Jesus downstairs. Watch the bulletin for more details.

We are hopeful that we can continue to offer outreach to Carveth and Fox Run. This will be possible if we have some singers to join in.

There is also a consideration for upcoming pastoral care. With an aging congregation, we recognize that our members will need support, caring, and visits. Session has a Sharing and Caring sub-committee that presently looks after sending cards and prayer shawls. They will try to do visiting as lay worship leaders do not offer pastoral care. Again we will need to offer that support from within our group. Think about what YOU can do. We welcome anyone to that committee.

This time of year, we can remember others in need and pass on the joy and celebration of the birth of Christ at Grace United Church



Together we can create a Vision!

By Tammy Fergusson

The Visioning Committee is continuing to explore new ways to ensure Grace United Church's future. For the past few years, we have been exploring ways to balance our budget and cooperate with other churches in the region.

We've had initial meetings with a few other local churches and it seems that most of the churches in the area are experiencing the same challenges as Grace United. Most churches have roughly 25 - 30 people attending church and are experiencing diminishing budgets. What is certain for Grace United Church is that after our Beloved Reverend Takouhi moves to Trinity United in Smith Falls, Session has arranged for Lay Worship Leaders and Retired Ministers to lead our regular Sunday worship for the next six months.

This will give the Visioning Committee time to explore future opportunities. The Committee plans to report to the Official Board and then to the Community of Faith in the near future. As I told our community librarian the other day, "Do not fear! Grace United Church is not done yet!" We are excited for our future

Thank you for all you do to keep Grace United moving forward

By Vicki Leakey

We are so fortunate to be heading into the year end with the support and caring of the Grace United Church family. Yes, we have change coming in the New Year; however, every member of the church boards are working endlessly to ensure that we can continue to enjoy our life and activity here at the church. The months of November and December continue with great concerts and Christmas music. On November 30th we are working to have another successful Christmas Market and look for anyone that wishes to contribute to please let us know. The pie ladies continue to provide the community with great pies that are shared by many families. All of which helps the financial support for the church.

Grace United Church is appreciated in our local community where we support many programs for fitness, French language, Gananoque Food Network as well as funding for our local groups to help them throughout these very challenging times. We have been able to maintain our giving's and fundraising efforts to help with operating costs yet still provide for Mission and Service and our local charity needs.

We have the ability and will distribute brochures explaining how you can set up PAR or preauthorized remittance to Grace United, which is a great way to spread out your

automatic giving's throughout the year. You can also E-transfer from your on-line bank account. 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.

This is a season for hope and gratitude for what we have achieved and what we will continue to achieve in the future. Without even asking, our church family continues with strong efforts by giving Grace United Church time, talent and finances within one's means. We need to show patience with each other and show strength and optimism for a future that continues to give this church family and the community comfort and friendship.

Season's Greetings and all the best in the New Year

Pies for the People!

By Elaine Davidson

Do you have your pies for Christmas?

Our merry band of pie makers continue to make pies all year round, so when you want to order one, just call Carol Currie at 613-382-4376 or pick some up at the Christmas Market on November 30.

Check out our list of yummy pies

\$20.00

Mincemeat

\$15.00

Strawberry, strawberry/rhubarb,
rhubarb, cherry, blueberry,
bumbleberry, peach, apple.

\$20.00

Raspberry

The pie makers are now donning fun red Tee-shirts which read "Pies for God's Sake", so we are a walking advertisement for our pies when we are out and about. We had a very successful pie sale at Thanksgiving, so thanks to our church family and to the community for buying our pies.

And tie a string around your finger to remind yourself to pick up your Christmas pies at the Christmas Market on Saturday, November 30.

Not sure what to get someone for Christmas? We now have gift certificates for Pies. Great gift idea, let them pick their own variety of pie.



Make a difference with your White Gift

By Paul Scott with Barb Jenkins

White Gift Sunday dates back to 1903 in Painesville, Ohio. The wife of a Methodist minister and her two daughters came up with the idea of giving gifts wrapped in white paper at Christmas time to people in need. The idea was to make the gifts uniform so that the value of the gift would not matter, and to allow everyone to participate in giving as able.

White Gift Sunday has a long tradition at Grace United and this year it will be celebrated on Sunday, December 15. Participants are asked to place a monetary gift in a plain white envelope and bring it to church. This year our White Gifts will support The Gananoque and Area Community Kitchen. It is important that we continue to support the good works that exist in our own community.

The Community Kitchen offers cooking events once a month, on the third Wednesday, right here in our own Grace United kitchen. Numbers are increasing and they now feed about 25 – 30 participants who come from all walks of life and different needs such as help with cooking, loneliness, hunger and community togetherness. The Community Kitchen is working toward becoming a registered charity and is in need of funds to purchase supplies for their classes. Marian McLeod has agreed to come to our service on Sunday, December 8th to speak about this important work in our community.

Going back even further, there is a Chinese tradition inspired by a legend about Chinese people who gave their king gifts wrapped in plain white paper so that every gift would look the same. People gave the king what they were able to give and the king welcomed them all. The tradition of White Gift Sunday demonstrates the idea that the value of the gift is in the love and intention behind it, rather than its material worth. Your White Gift shares in the spirit of Christ and the God of love at Christmas. Let us continue to give gifts of love to people in need.



Christmas Cookie Decorating

November 27th Grace United Auditorium

The Gananoque & Area Community Kitchen will be offering elementary school students the opportunity to decorate Christmas Cookies, prepared Gingerbread and Shortbread at Grace United Church on 120 Pine Street after school November 27th.

Children must be accompanied by a parent, caregiver, etc. who need to stay for the activity. Join in! Please note that there could be eggs used in the making of the cookies. This is the first time we have offered this opportunity...should be FUN!

If you would like more information, please call Marian at 613-382-0165 or email at marianhmcleod@gmail.com.



Christmas Baking

November 27, 2024

Presented by the
Gananoque and Area Community Kitchen

3:15pm (3:30pm) in Kitchen preparations begins (you must register ahead for this). Set up of tables.

4:15pm to 5:15pm: Upbeat and fun music provided by the Gananoque Ukulele Group.

5:15pm: Supper: 2 or 3 variations of soup, rolls and baked goodie tasting!

Take home goodies...remember to bring a container!

Recipes are provided for all food that is prepared in the kitchen.

For more information and/or to reserve a spot, please contact Marian @ 613-382-0165 or email Marian @ marianhmcleod@gmail.com. Of course, if you find at the last minute you can attend, just call or come. All are welcome!



Grace United Church

Annual Christmas Market

Saturday, November 30th
10:00 am to 2:00pm



merry
Christmas

Local Vendors with Crafts, Baked Goods, Candles, Coffee, Avon, Humane Society Table, Wood Working and so much more.

Silent Auction – Raffle table

Delicious Hot Lunch

All are Welcome

- Free Admission -



Grace United Church Annual Red Wagon Food Drive Begins November 24th



Below is a suggest list of items to bring in each Sunday.

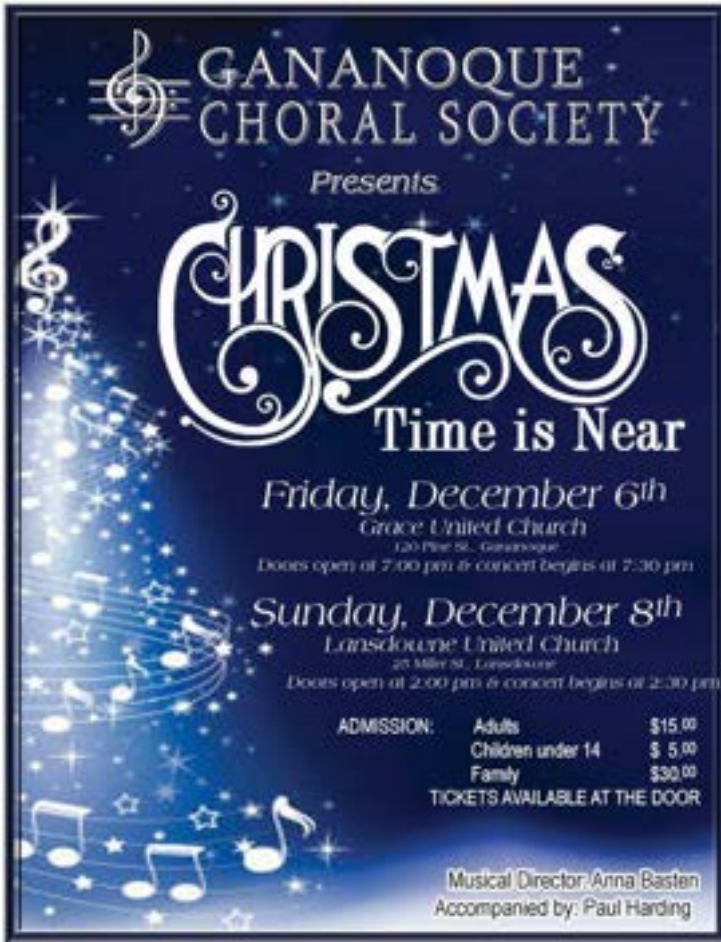
November 24th - Personal Items, Cleaning products
Toilet Paper, Paper towels, Toothpaste, Shampoo, Conditioner, Deodorant, Toothbrushes, Feminine products, Laundry Soap, Dish Soap, Household Cleaning products.

December 1st - Breakfast Items
Various Cereal, Oatmeal, Instant Oatmeal, Jams & Jellies, Peanut Butter, & Peanut Butter substitutes, Pancake Mix and syrup.

December 8th - Canned Goods
Tuna, Salmon, Flaked Chicken or Ham, Spam, Vegetables, Tomatoes, Chunky Soups, Stews, Mayonnaise, Ketchup.

December 15th - Snack Items & Miscellaneous.
Juice Boxes, Kids snack packs, Peanut free snacks, Granola bars, Crackers, Cookies, Popcorn, Cake mixes.

NOTE: Cash Donations are always appreciated.



Services for Advent & New Years

Sunday, December 1st - 10:30am

Advent One – HOPE – Communion
Worship Leader Rev. Takouhi

Sunday, December 15th – 10:30am

Advent Three – JOY – Baptism
Worship Leader – Rev. Takouhi
Farewell Lunch for Rev. T.

Sunday, December 22nd – 10:30 am

Advent Four – LOVE
Worship Leader Rev. Takouhi

Sunday, December 29th – 10:30am

Baby Shower for Jesus
Worship Leaders
Tammy Fergusson/Colleen Harding

Sunday, December 8th – 10:30am

Advent Two – PEACE
Worship Leader Rev. Takouhi

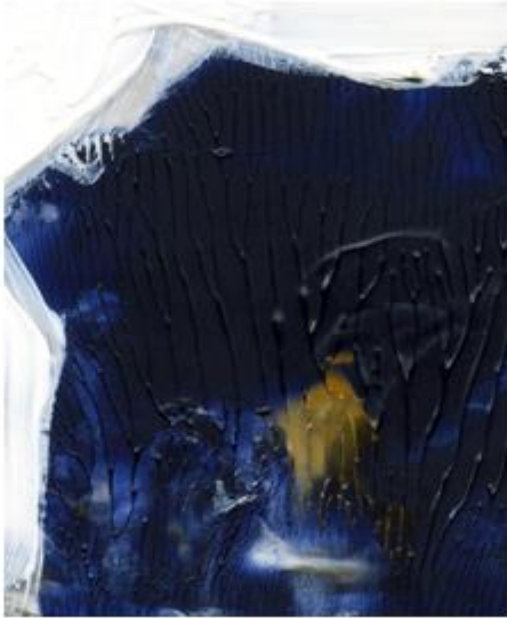
Wednesday, December 18th - 7:00pm

Blue Christmas Service
This gathering is for ALL
Worship Leader – Rev. Takouhi

Tuesday, December 24th - 7:00pm

Christmas Eve Service
A service of Lessons & Carols
Worship Leader, Rev. Takouhi





"**DECEMBER 18, 2024**
7:00 P.M."

"Blue Christmas" ¶

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

All are welcome. ¶

Not everyone is up for 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. ¶

This gathering is for ALL — it is a gathering in honesty about grief, hearing the consolation found in God's presence and love. ¶

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 and Light even in the longest night.** ¶



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

Come to our Baby Shower for Jesus

By Colleen Harding

You are invited to a baby shower for Jesus, on Sunday, December 29 at 10:30 am. This informal celebration will be held downstairs in the auditorium with carols, readings, prayers, coffee and treats. Please bring a gift suitable for a young child. The gifts will be passed on to families in need. Come and bring a friend! Let's fill the manger!



Celebrations for December, January, February & March – Happy Birthday or Anniversary to all those who celebrating over the next few months.

Happy Birthday to Denise W., Steve T., Paul S., Bonnie S., Carol G., Catherine M., Vicki L., Gayle H., Cliff E., Marj C., Merna P., Gary S., Cecile B., Peter M., Helen C., Gary P., Tim B., Connie T., Dianne R., Marilyn M., Colleen H., Marg W., Diane K., Gillian M.

Happy Anniversary To Linda & Brian, 56 years, David & Joan, 46 Years, an Ron & Mary 51 years.

Congratulations Everyone!!

Contributors this month are:

Rev. Takouhi, Vicki Leakey, Barb Jenkins, Denise Wood, Elaine Davidson, Tammy Fergusson, Laurie Cadue, Paul Scott.

Deadline for the Spring Edition of Grace's Chatter
March 28, 2025

Contact information:

Call Rev. Takouhi to book a visit. (Wednesday to Sunday)

Rev. Takouhi (direct Line) 613-777-0880

Email: RevTakouhi@Terraautopia.ca

Session: Chair: Barb Jenkins: 613-583-2077 barbjenkins1@gmail.com

Board of Stewards: Chair: Vicki Leakey 613-382-4012 vickileakey@gmail.com

Official Board: Chair: Brian Brooks 613-382-2385 brooksb525@gmail.com

