

Between the A isles

A Robertson-Wesley United Church Quarterly

WINTER



Welcome

It's that time of year again... Days are getting shorter, nights are getting longer, Christmas lights and decorations are appearing, and the shopping areas are getting busier and busier... "Yes, it's beginning to look a lot like Christmas".

Christmas is a very happy, festive, family and friend-filled time for many of us. Even if it does stress us out completely (just *what* am I going to get for my god-daughter this year... Aaarrggghh!!!), it is a time where we get to enjoy each other's company and hopefully enjoy some good food and great times. (And also some lovely music... Just check out both the Advent Concert series and the Lessons and Carols service times listed in the newsletter.)

But it is also the time of year when we have a chance to reflect on all the good that we have in our lives, and to remember that there are others out there who are not as fortunate. Holidays can be a dark time for some people. It's good to know that there are people out there trying to help others in need, whether through our own Community Dinner nights or somewhere like the Boyle Street Community Services Centre, who the UCW got a chance to learn about at one of their recent meetings. So we need to take this opportunity to rejoice in our own blessings and remember and hopefully help others in need.

And now for something completely different (and just to lighten the mood a bit), I'm going to put on my scientist cap and recommend a web-site I came across while looking up something else. Christmas time can be a great opportunity to do a lot of fun activities with your children, grand-kids, and other youngsters. I'm involved with a program on the University of Alberta campus involved in getting young girls interested in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) called WISEST. While doing some work for them, I found this web-site, that in some ways is a cross between crafts for kids and science experiments, all centered on the holiday theme. For anyone looking to try some interesting activities with their kids over the holidays, you might want to check it out:

<http://littlebinsforlittlehands.com/christmas-science-activities-kids-top-10-christmas-ideas-kids/>

You will find some really interesting up-coming events listed in the newsletter this time. Also, R-W members have been busy travelling this past year, and we have some great articles on the interesting places they went and people they met. Hopefully you will find something to peak your interest in one or two of our pieces.

I would also like to extend my thanks to Nancy, Maria, Janet, Maria, Tammy-Jo, Glen and Shauna for all their hard work on the newsletters this past year.

As always, I wish you a merry, healthy and hopefully peaceful holiday season.

Marilee Stephens

Ministry Vacancy

The Joint Search Committee has begun its work to find a new Minister of Spiritual and Pastoral Care Development. Advertising has been sent to the United Church of Canada's vacancy list, and the committee is contacting prospective candidates on the availability list, as well as other ministers who might be interested.

Congregation members are encouraged to circulate the following advertisement to possible candidates, or to suggest names for us to contact. Suggestions can be e-mailed to searchcommittee@rwuc.org, or given to Joint Search Committee members Patrik Foff, Colleen Ouellette, Betty Squair, Hal Thiessen, Rev. Stuart Jackson (Presbytery rep.) or Katharine Moore (Presbytery rep.). We also ask for your prayers as we move toward the next phase: reviewing applications and selecting candidates for interviews. Thank you!

Colleen Ouellette

Minister of Spiritual and Pastoral Care Development

Robertson-Wesley United Church is seeking a full-time **Minister of Spiritual and Pastoral Care Development** to work together with the full-time Minister of Congregation and Community Development.

A vibrant and welcoming place, R-W is a large urban church on the edge of downtown Edmonton. Our deep theological faith is explored through conversations, the arts, and worship. We strive to be creative, while recognizing the importance of tradition and ritual in our faith. We are a community hub that is much more than Sunday morning worship service; we are a diverse, intergenerational, affirming congregation that offers support at all stages of life and seeks to live out our faith in the world around us.

The ministers will work together as equals, and will be passionate co-leaders in the areas of worship, volunteer support, governance, and administration. In addition, the **Minister of Spiritual and Pastoral Care Development** will be responsible for pastoral care and seniors' ministry, and for faith formation. A complete job description can be found as part of the JNAC report, available on the Robertson-Wesley website under 'Ministry Vacancy': www.rwuc.org

Applications will be accepted until November 30, 2016, and may be submitted by e-mail to searchcommittee@rwuc.org.

A VIP's View of the Carnegie Hall Trip

Not only choristers went along on the trip to New York. As well as the singers who performed in Carnegie Hall, there were a number of "VIPs" along for the trip, who were friends and family members of several of the performers. One of the people who decided to join the group in New York was Tony Jansen. Tony had not been to New York for 27 years, and had a few highlights from this trip: the Eternal Light performance that the United Voices of Edmonton choir took part in; taking in some musical theatre; and a visit to Central Park. He also got acquainted with a larger part of the city by taking one of the "Hop-On, Hop-Off" bus tours, which is a fantastic way to see a lot of the city.

The VIPs obviously did not take part in the workshops/rehearsals, but did have extremely good seats for the performance and attended the gala dinner following. Tony thoroughly enjoyed the performance of "Lux Eterna", which the choir members sang in. He had seen the performance that the choir had done in Edmonton earlier in the year, but as he indicated, it's a totally different experience with about 200 voices and a full orchestra. The VIPs' seats were in a great spot, about 10 rows back from the stage, and Tony was able to pick out where nearly all the choir members he knew were on stage. Tony was actually surprised at the size of Carnegie Hall, as he thought it would be bigger. However, the acoustics were fantastic, and he was quite taken with a number of the nuances that Dr. Griffith's direction brought to the performance, including the use of silence. At the gala later, Dr. Griffith actually wanted some feedback from someone seated in the audience, and I recruited Tony to give his impressions. Tony was happy to talk to Dr. Griffith and pass along his impressions, which were all favourable.

However, since the VIPs did not take part in the workshops and rehearsals, Tony had some time to explore New York City. One of the interesting events he was able to attend was on the Sunday morning, before the performance, when he went to the second mass at St. Patrick's cathedral. He wanted to hear the magnificent organ they have at the cathedral, and also got to hear a wonderful sermon that the Archbishop gave. The service was in English, and there was some familiar hymns sung during the service. While he could not partake of the sacrament of communion itself, he could be blessed by the priest, which was a nice inclusion.

Another time, he spent about 3 hours in Central Park, which according to him, was enough time to take in about one-third of the park. He did get to see the Japanese Garden, as well as see both a ballerina and a piano player put on performances right in the park. As he noted, you never know what you will come across in Central Park.

When the performers did have some free time, Tony got to hang out with his "ladies" (Sylvia Duffus, Kathleen Gowers, Clara Dyck and Judy Hayman). They had some great meals together and went to see the musical "An American in Paris". Tony noted that the two musicals he did see (specifically "An American in Paris", and "Kinky Boots") were very different from each other, one being a timeless production with Gershwin-written songs, while the other being a much more modern performance with music by Cyndi Lauper and Harvey Feinstein. Both shows were very enjoyable, but very different.

According to Tony, the whole trip was enjoyable and he was glad he was able to join the group in New York.

Marilee Stephens

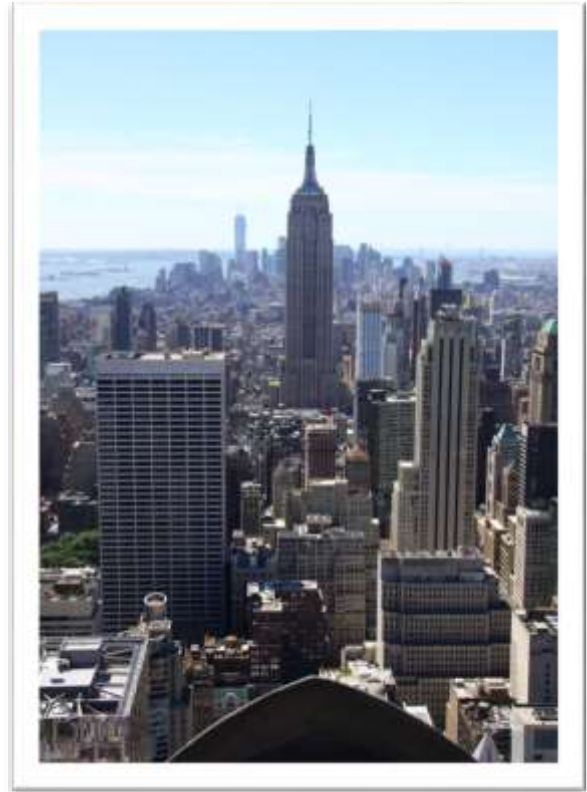


Photo by Albert deVos. New York, 2016

Eternal Light— A Chorister Reflects On New York

I use journaling to capture the highlights and experiences of my journeys, and this year's choir tour to New York is no different. This trip to New York is not my first visit to the United States. Nor is it really my first visit to New York; I changed planes there once before. But the fact we sang at Carnegie Hall, one of the most prestigious concert venues in the world, makes this trip special.

Each of us who went on that trip has activities and experiences in common. We all participated in nine grueling hours of rehearsals followed by the Eternal Light concert in the main auditorium in Carnegie Hall. And each of us had activities and experiences that were uniquely our own. My choices included visits to Central Park and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

We had two rehearsals—one on Friday morning and one on Saturday afternoon—at the Park Central Hotel, located kitty corner from Carnegie Hall. There, the Distinguished Concerts International New York (DCINY) artistic director and principal conductor Jonathan Griffith melded a group of 160 singers from around the world into a cohesive choir ready to sing on the main stage in Carnegie Hall. Under his direction, we worked with singers from as close to home as Flin Flon, Manitoba, and as far away as Perth, Australia. What a phenomenal experience!

Continues on page 4

Eternal Light – A Chorister Reflects On New York continued

On Sunday, we arrived at Carnegie Hall to sing. We had a dress rehearsal, complete with the DCINY orchestra, on the Ronald Perelman Stage in the Isaac Stern Auditorium. And then it was concert time. To say we sang to an appreciative audience is an understatement. According to the review that appeared in *New York Concert Review* (June 16, 2016), “the audience ‘returned to earth’ and gave the performers a well-deserved standing ovation.”

By the way, Ronald Perelman is an American philanthropist who has provided significant financial support to Carnegie Hall. Isaac Stern helped save Carnegie Hall from demolition in the 1960s. Carnegie Hall is named after Andrew Carnegie, the industrialist who paid for the original construction.

After the Friday rehearsal, I did two of the things that made my New York experience uniquely mine. I visited Central Park and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.


It was easy to get to Central Park. The south end is only a few blocks from Carnegie Hall. The other end is over two and a half miles further north. That’s roughly the same distance as the distance between Churchill Square and the old Royal Alberta Museum here in Edmonton. And there is just so much to see and do there. There are even two zoos in Central Park—the Central Park Zoo and the Tisch Children’s Zoo! And I visited both of them.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art is located about half way up the east side of Central Park. Now The Met is one of the largest art galleries in the world and has over two million pieces of art in its collection. In the time I had there, I only got a really quick sampling of its 17 galleries.

When I returned home, and while I was there, I journaled my New York experience. Here I share a part of my own experience with you. What I experienced is only a small sample of the things there are to see and do in New York.

Ask any of us from the choir who went to New York, and each of us has our own story to share.

John Fleming



Deadline for the
Spring edition submissions:
February 5, 2017

*Robertson-Wesley Ringers***The R-W Ringers at the International Handbell Symposium**

The Robertson-Wesley Ringers travelled to Vancouver for the International Handbell Symposium, July 26 – 30th, 2016. It was a great time seeing friends and making new friends from around the world! We had Deimut and Thomas from Germany join our group, giving us an international flavour. We had rehearsed with our German friends once at Robertson-Wesley Church before going to Vancouver and with them numerous times throughout the symposium. Thomas conducts choirs in Germany and is working diligently to develop awareness and start more choirs there.

The various conductors from his/her country gave us the experience of ringing international music. The music from each country had a distinct flavour and we were encouraged through explanations, either in English or through a translator, as well as gestures, on how to play the music more authentically. This was both challenging and fun. The highlight of the mass ringing was witnessing and participating in the performance of our own Betty Radford’s composition, “So Glorious and Free”, which represented Canada. This song opened the Final Concert and was fabulous with Stuart Sladden conducting this magnificent piece of music.

Each day consisted of mass rehearsals, in which we practiced the songs for the final concert. Workshops and mini-concerts were also woven into some of the days. The workshops were geared to developing technique, the culture of the First Nations people, and a symposium handbell choir. John Hooper led the symposium choir, in which ringers from throughout the world had committed to working on the music to perform it at the Final Concert. One of the pieces the symposium choir performed was John’s original composition. We were privileged to play another of John Hooper’s compositions, “Introspection”, in the second Showcase Concert. There were many groups performing at either the Mini-concerts or the Showcase Concerts. The groups from Japan and Hong Kong showed us their magnificent technique in their beautiful songs.

On the Thursday morning, there was an Interfaith Worship Service in which our conductor, Tammy-Jo Mortensen, was involved in the musical aspect of this gathering time. Through the prayer and songs, the First Nations people were recognized. Rev. Karen Medland, from BC, led the reflection in the service.

The First Nations of BC were recognized and celebrated in various ways at the symposium. A meal of authentic food and Native entertainment were enjoyed on the Thursday evening. Just outside the room where the meal was served, First Nations’ artisans were also working and selling carvings and jewellery.

The overall feel was magnificent – ringing with 750 people in one large room, with over 3500 bells. What a glorious sound! The rehearsals each day, mixed with workshops and time to spend with friends over meals, developed a bond among handbell ringers worldwide. All of this culminated with a concert on the final day with an audience to witness our hard work before and during the symposium. The banquet was a great way to close this symposium and introduce Australia as the hosts of the next symposium in two years. Thank you for your continued support of the choir in our learning and playing.

Joan Thompson

Women's Weekend 2016

Life's Undulations: A Graffiti Exercise

Have you ever...

- * swum in the Atlantic Ocean?
- * heard the sounds of the ocean inside a shell?
- * sailed on a blowing cloud?
- * embraced the morning rain on your face?
- * climbed a mountain?
- * seen the sunrise from the top of Mt. Sinai?
- * danced in the rain?
- * seen the reflections in Strawberry Creek?
- * walked in the eye of a hurricane?
- * walked beside the Sea of Galilee?
- * showered under a mountain waterfall?
- * embraced the unknown?
- * swum in an ocean?
- * done something you were terrified to try?
- * flown a kite?

If you said "yes" to any of these questions, you may have been one of the fifteen women lucky enough to attend the 2016 Women's Weekend event at Rudy and Tena Wiebe's beautiful Strawberry Creek Lodge.

Carol Anne Inglis (on behalf of the Planning Committee for the Women's Weekend)



Congratulations!

Alison Wood Honored with Two Handbell Awards

This summer and fall, congregation member **Alison Wood** was honoured with two prestigious handbell awards. The first honour was given to Alison at the 17th International Handbell Symposium in Vancouver in July. Alison has made significant contributions to the development of the International Handbell Symposium and to the art of handbell ringing around the world. She has been ringing, directing, giving workshops, and serving on various international committees for many, many years and is a past Executive Director of the International Handbell Committee.

The second honour was bestowed in October at the Alberta provincial gathering, "Handbell Discovery." The Alberta Guild of English Handbell Ringers wanted to acknowledge Alison's long service and amazing dedication to the provincial guild. They commissioned a handbell composition from Dr. John Hooper (a long-time friend of hers). The composition "Circles and Smiles," was premiered at Discovery. The title referred to the many years of coaching that Alison gave to a couple of generations of ringers, insisting that a few of the most important things in handbell ringing was to make beautiful circles and to make sure you smile while playing! The commission and award was a surprise for Alison, and she WAS surprised!

Congratulations Alison!

Tammy-Jo Mortensen

United Church Women

On October 11th, 2016, **Melissa Faithful** and **Doug Cooke** delivered an excellent information session to the UCW group about the services and programs of the Boyle Street Community Services centre.



Melissa and Doug are street outreach workers, who are working with the goal of establishing a trusting relationship with homeless or needy people, so that they will accept the service centre's help.

The centre has 240 paid workers and many volunteers who assist people in need. Last year they helped **12,000 people**

with programs such as job readiness, adult services, drop-in centre, housing, and family and youth services. The centre also works effectively with other inner-city serving organizations, agencies and Government departments.

Barb Oberg



Live Nativity & BBQ

Robertson-Wesley United Church invites the whole community to our **Live Nativity Scene** this Christmas. Young and old alike as well as your pets will have an opportunity to interact with the nativity characters and even become some of the characters if desired. We will supply costumes (bring along your cameras for photos) and sing along with carollers. This year we will be having an outside BBQ, so come have some hot food, cozy up to the fire and meet your neighbours while listening to stories and roasting marshmallows.

This all-age event is on Saturday December 17th from 4-5:30 pm on the front lawn of the church. Stop by with your family, friends and neighbours for an evening of festivities, treats, and hot chocolate!

There is no admission charge, but the church will be accepting donations of mittens, gloves, socks, toiletries or non-perishable food for the Bissell Centre.



Count up to Christmas

The Robertson-Wesley United Church Advent Calendar

The community is invited to post or send us their best selfies in front of our manger on our facebook page or via twitter. There will be a sign hung from our manger starting on Dec 1 till Dec 25. We challenge groups and individuals to create their best manger scene at the stable in front of the church. The added challenge is that we want the number of characters and participants to match the number of the day. So on Dec 10th we want a photo with 10 people, on Dec 3, 3 people etc. We want at least 3 pictures each day! Please send your photos to mail@rwuc.org. Let's have some fun. Be creative and show us what you've got!!

*Let us gather to
celebrate Christmas*

Service of Lessons & Carols

Sunday Dec 11, 4:00 pm

A beautiful afternoon of candlelight,
carols and choir anthems

Live Nativity

Saturday Dec 17

4:00 pm – 5:30 pm

An opportunity to interact with
nativity characters and sing carols

Family Christmas Eve

Saturday Dec 24, 4:00 pm

Exploring the Christmas story
with all ages

Christmas Eve Candlelight

Family Service

Saturday Dec 24, 8:00 pm

Christmas Eve for all ages

Christmas Eve Choral Service

Saturday, Dec 24, 11:00 pm

Music and songs of joy
for the Holy night



Sunday worship

Advent 1: Lament

Sunday, Nov 27, 10:30 am

Music: Choir of R-W

Advent 2: Intentionality

Sunday, Dec 4, 10:30 am

Music: Choir of R-W; R-W Ringers

Sunday, Dec 11, 10:30 am

Advent 3: Stand Together

White Gift Sunday—bring donations
for the Bissell Centre

Music: Cantlon Children's Choir

Sunday, Dec 18, 10:30 am

Advent 4: Dare to Dream

Music: Choir of Robertson-Wesley

Sunday, Dec 25, 10:30 am

Christmas

Chapel Service with fellowship to follow in
Memorial hall

***Programs for Children & Youth
weekly at 10:30 am***

Advent Music Concert Series

Robertson-Wesley is hosting a noon-hour concert series again this Advent, for the four Thursdays in December. The concerts will run from 12:10-12:50, and admission is by freewill offering with donations for the performers and for the Robertson-Wesley Music Society.

Dec. 1 – Julia Davis, piano & organ and Alison Stewart, violin

Dec. 8 – Joel Gray, trumpet and Tammy-Jo Mortensen, piano & organ

Dec. 15 – Warren Mack, organ

Dec. 22 – Sandy Adams, harpsichord and Tammy-Jo Mortensen, organ



Photo by Hal Thiessen, 2014

Lessons & Carols

The service of Lessons and Carols takes place at Robertson-Wesley United Church on Sunday, December 11, 2016 at 4:00 p.m.

This is an afternoon of traditional congregational carols, scripture readings and music sung by the Choir of Robertson-Wesley, directed by Tammy-Jo Mortensen and accompanied by Belinda Chiang. The music includes several traditional favourites and some newly composed music as well.

The gentle beauty of the dissipating winter light combined with the music, candles and the Christmas story creates a magical afternoon. Please come and invite your friends and neighbours! This has become a favourite tradition for many. No charge, freewill offering.

Returning to the Flock

After being asked to write about my return to the R-W congregation, I did a little serious pondering.

I had moved from a small city in B.C. and had belonged to a small, close knit St Andrews United Church family where being active in several areas was very fulfilling.

Once back in Edmonton, I was without a place to worship in for a few years, until moving to the R-W neighbourhood and thus finding this church. Try as I might, it was difficult to find a niche to fit into, so after a few years I quit going to church.

This left a very large hole in my life so I tried different churches, some with a more modern, youthful form of worship, but nothing seemed to work.

Finally, I decided to take faith by the scruff and try R-W again, maybe this time with no expectations or involvement, only a place to come to listen and worship. Well, that plan lasted about two Sundays.

Sitting in front of me during a service was Shirley, who started talking to me and invited me to Fellowship where I was introduced to several people. The next week I was in the kitchen serving coffee, tea and goodies--right in my element.

Soon I was part of a happy, caring group that I look forward to each week. This has led to much more involvement: UCW, Community Dinner, Communion serving, and Women's Weekend, for example. Much to my delight, I now have a home to worship in and to interact with caring Christians. I feel truly at home.

Ruth Belford

Spiritual Formation Pod

October 2, 2016 found 6 people in thoughtful conversation about Spiritual Formation as it is found at Robertson-Wesley. Fueled by coffee and cookies, we found three themes that inspired a desire for further discussion. After some exploration of a large variety of ideas, we managed to select three that really excited us: planting seeds about spirituality, living our lives with a sense of awareness/intention, and creating a climate where we feel safe (sometimes spiritual formation happens when we are most vulnerable). Watch for news of a time and place to join us for an exploration of how Robertson-Wesley might bring these themes to life.

Sarah Wiens

Stewardship Speaker Breakfast with Award Winning Playwright Vern Thiessen

Vern Thiessen is one of Canada's most produced playwrights. SHAKESPEARE'S WILL, APPLE, EINSTEIN'S GIFT, VIMY, and BIRD BRAIN all premiered in Edmonton, and have gone on to hundreds of productions in Canada, the US, the UK, Europe, China, Australia and New Zealand.

He is the winner of the Dora, Sterling, and Carol Bolt awards for Outstanding New Play. He is also the recipient of the City of Edmonton Arts Achievement Award, the University of Alberta Alumni Award, and the Governor General's Award for Drama, Canada's highest honour for playwriting. He was recently nominated for a City of Edmonton Award for Outstanding Artistic Leadership.

After seven years living and working in New York City, Vern returned to Edmonton in 2014 to become Artistic Director of Workshop West Playwrights' Theatre. He is married to best-selling novelist Susie Moloney.



The Breakfast is presented by the Robertson-Wesley Stewardship Committee at:

**10:00 am on Saturday,
January 21, 2017.**

Tickets are \$20 and can be purchased in advance from Robertson-Wesley Stewardship Committee members, and through the church office. For more information call 780 482-1587 or email: mail@rwuc.org

***Do you have an experience you would like to share
with the congregation?***

*Between the Aisles accepts unsolicited submissions from
members for each quarterly issue.*

Submissions can be emailed to: rwucnews@gmail.com

Journey with Rebecca Wright to NAIN

NAIN, it's worth the journey

NAIN is the acronym for **North American Interfaith Network**. It is a network of interfaith organizations spanning North America which promote dialogue and understanding between people of different faiths at the local level. Once a year, NAIN holds a conference called the NAIN Connect. Over the last 28 years, the Connects have been held in various places in the United States and Canada, with the most recent Connect, 2016, being held in Mexico for the first time. As a member of the Edmonton Interfaith Centre for Education and Action, I have been to four out of the last five Connects.



The 2015 NAIN Connect was held in Regina, with the theme "Restoring Spirit through Sacred Listening." That one was rather special for me, partly because of its proximity to my home, but mainly because of the involvement of local indigenous communities and the focus on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). One thing I like very much about NAIN is the variety of people attending and the sheer breadth of perspectives they bring. I've heard perspectives on everything from religious intolerance to Kinder Eggs.

This past summer the Connect was held in Guadalajara, Mexico, with the



theme "Espacia Sagrada - Sacred Space." It was hosted by Carpe Diem Interfé A.C., the local interfaith organization. Since presentations were made in both English and Spanish, we were grateful to have simultaneous translation provided by students from the Universidad Autonoma de Guadalajara. The Connect opened with a Mayan salutation to the four directions, followed by a plenary session with Bishop Raúl Vera López. There were workshops and plenary sessions throughout the three days of the Connect, including a plenary by the young adult scholars. These were young people who had received scholarships to attend the NAIN Connect due to their involvement with interfaith work in their own communities.

We felt very welcomed in Guadalajara, both by Carpe Diem, who hosted us, and the Comunidad de Hermanos Esclavas de Cristo Rey (Community of Sisters Slaves of Christ the King), who accommodated us in their convent. The sisters provided us with home cooked Mexican food, nice places to sleep, and a friendly attitude and atmosphere. Carpe Diem did all they could to make us feel welcome and happy. In order to give us a nice send-off, they told us to be at the courtyard at noon on the last day, and suddenly a Mariachi band appeared (and there was impromptu dancing). The last formal event of the NAIN was a tour and dinner in Tlaquepaque, one of the most artsy districts of Guadalajara.

Every NAIN Connect has its own individual flair, but one thing



which is essential to all of them is dialogue between people of different ages and different faith communities. By going to NAIN Connects, I have shared with people who I would not have otherwise met.

Next year, the NAIN Connect will be in San Diego from August 6 to 10. The theme will be "Harmony: The Journey to One Heart". The organizers recommend early registration.

In 2018, the Connect will be in Edmonton – keep an eye out.

Rebecca Wright (with input from Margery and Larry)

Rudolph Resale

Robertson-Wesley United Church is having a giant sale of Christmas items and other treasures. Memorial Hall will be filled with lots of bargains including gently used Christmas items, preserves and baking, crafts, gifts, books, toys and collector's items.



**Saturday, November 26
from 8:30 am to 3 pm.**

Book Buddies



Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission has led to many opportunities for greater understanding of First Nations peoples. The next Book Buddies' selection, Nancy Turner's "Earth's Blanket: Traditional Teaching for Sustainable Living", opens the reader's eyes to an exciting and wholesome way of viewing Mother Earth. Ms. Turner, an ethnobotanist at the University of Victoria, is the author of more than twenty books on plants, habitat, and their roles in the culture of "place". Copies are available for \$25 through the church office or in Memorial Hall on Sundays. Date TBA. Facilitated by Nancy Heule.

A Minneapolis Hallmark

“Would you be interested in going to church with us on Sunday?” he said. “Of course”, we replied. We would be in Minneapolis that day to visit him, my husband’s uncle, and his wife. They would love us to attend the service with them, and afterwards, go for brunch.

Westminster Presbyterian is an old brick church that sits in the middle of beautiful Minneapolis. It looks much like several other stalwart old-timers in the neighbourhood; Episcopalian, United Methodist, Lutheran, Congregationalist, and Roman Catholic, all of which look stately but stale. What is the attendance like, we wondered, as we approached Westminster. Will the oldsters outnumber younger adults? Will there be more empty seats than full ones?

“We are so busy and have so much work to do in this city”, Aunt Susan told us, “that we are now constructing an office building next door. We’ll be able to do more of the things we want to do in the community. The cost is 23 million dollars, and we raised that amount in no time”. No, we are not deaf, Susan, I thought, we are simply dumb-founded. We will say something when we can breathe again.

This church, with its traditional building, stained glass windows, and large pipe organ, is home to three thousand members. There are no large screens on the walls, no drums or guitars, and choir members do not clasp their fingers around microphones like they are lounge lizards. They simply enter the sanctuary at the beginning of the service dressed in their choir gowns and proceed down the aisles to the choir loft. Very much like Robertson-Wesley. Hmm, Westminster hasn’t adopted the belief that in order to get “new blood” we need to adopt “new music” and “new technology”.

The building is full of people of all ages. Some are crowded around bulletin boards, some are drinking coffee and conversing, some are viewing the art work on display in the gallery or selecting books from the book cart. We browse the pamphlet rack and are stunned by the breadth and scope of programs focused on social justice or theological education, much of it shared with other denominations.

There is a monthly Town Hall Forum that explores topics of interest to both church members and to the wider community. One of the speakers is Princeton’s Chair of African American Studies and his presentation is entitled “Racism and the Soul of America”. Another speaker is well-known journalist Thomas Friedman, who wrote “Hot, Flat and Crowded”. Several of the weekly activities take place on the same evening, making it easier for families to attend, and often a meal is included.

Susan shows me the nursery and comments that it is too small for the number of children each week and she describes how her grandson of seventeen can hardly wait for each Sunday’s Youth Group!

Presbyterianism was always renowned for its emphasis on the Word of God, and the sermon, entitled “How Do We Name God?”, was both inspiring and insightful. Another attribute of Presbyterianism was evident as well and that is the importance of training and

education for both ordained ministers and the laity. In fact, all newly elected officers of Westminster church, such as board members and elders, attend a six-month program entitled “Called to Discipleship”, in which they support one another in their Christian journey. Those lay leaders who continue to serve the church after their first term, participate in a second program, “Nurturing Spiritual Leaders”, which includes Bible and book studies.

Westminster seems to have it all; community involvement, a solid theological foundation, education for everyone, fellowship, and music. The church is truly a Christian presence in the city of Minneapolis and it is clear that many in the congregation are serious about how they live out their faith. Much like Robertson-Wesley, I thought, only bigger.

Nancy Heule



Robertson-Wesley United Church

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White Gift Sunday

White Gift Sunday dates back to 1904 in Ohio where the wife of a Methodist minister and her two daughters came up with the idea of giving gifts wrapped in white paper to people in need at Christmas time. Gifts were wrapped in white so that they would be anonymous. The United Church has participated in this tradition since the inception of the church.

This year The Bissell Centre has made a few minor changes. Rather than request a wide assortment of individual items as we have done in the past, we simplified our Wish List into "Men's Stockings", "Women's Stockings", and general presents for Infants, Children and Teens.

These gifts will be collected and delivered to the Bissell Centre on Sunday Dec 11th, 2016. We thank you in advance for your generosity.

Women's Stockings

- Wool Socks
- Wool Socks
- Wool Socks
- Wool Socks
- Wool Socks
- Wool Socks
- Wool Socks
- Wool Socks
- Wool Socks
- Wool Socks

Men's Stockings

- Wool Socks
- Wool Socks
- Wool Socks
- Wool Socks
- Wool Socks
- Wool Socks
- Wool Socks
- Wool Socks
- Wool Socks
- Wool Socks

Children's Gifts

- Children's Gifts
- Children's Gifts
- Children's Gifts
- Children's Gifts
- Children's Gifts
- Children's Gifts
- Children's Gifts
- Children's Gifts
- Children's Gifts
- Children's Gifts

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You can donate to the church using PayPal?



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In Advent time we watch
and pray expectantly
for Christ's birthday.



Advent Calendar 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>27</p> <p>Light a candle and share what you are hopeful for. Read a Minute for Mission. united-church.ca/worship</p>	<p>28</p> <p>List 3 of your hopes for others this holiday.</p>	<p>29</p> <p>Ask someone: What are you waiting for and what is it like to wait?</p>	<p>30</p> <p>Make homemade Christmas cards with personalized messages.</p>	<p>1</p> <p>Learn about Rosa Parks. How might you support civil rights in your community?</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Make a prayer chain (write prayers on paper chains)</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Say the Lord's Prayer together.</p>
<p>4</p> <p>Light a candle and pray for peace. Read a Minute for Mission. united-church.ca/worship</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Make a list of 3 things you can do to bring or share peace.</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Happy St. Nicholas Day! Surprise someone with a simple gift.</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Make a string of paper cranes to hang in your home.</p>	<p>8</p> <p>Learn about someone who is a peace-builder (see list below).</p>	<p>9</p> <p>Think of one thing that you can do to support a peace-builder.</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Say or sing the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi together.</p>
<p>11</p> <p>Light a candle and share what brings you joy! Read a Minute for Mission. united-church.ca/worship</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Make a list of 3 things you would give baby Jesus.</p>	<p>13</p> <p>Ask someone: what has given you great joy?</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Share something that brings you joy with someone.</p>	<p>15</p> <p>Do 2 "random acts of kindness" today.</p>	<p>16</p> <p>Do a chore that will bring joy to someone else.</p>	<p>17</p> <p>Bless someone with a traditional blessing.</p>
<p>18</p> <p>Light a candle and give thanks for your loved ones. Read a Minute for Mission. united-church.ca/worship</p>	<p>19</p> <p>Share 3 things that you love about someone.</p>	<p>20</p> <p>Visit or call someone who may be lonely.</p>	<p>21</p> <p>Write a note to someone that you love.</p>	<p>22</p> <p>Have a buy-nothing day! Try to make something new.</p>	<p>23</p> <p>Spend 1 minute in silence together.</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Say or sing a traditional table grace together.</p>
<p>25</p> <p>Read Luke chapter 2 together. Read a Minute for Mission. united-church.ca/worship</p>	<p>Place this calendar on your fridge and use a magnet to count down the days!</p> <p>SOME PEACE-BUILDERS: Dalai Lama, Tibetan spiritual leader; Rigoberta Menchú, Mayan advocate for women's rights; Craig Kielburger, advocate for children's rights; Nelson Mandela, fought for human rights; Susan Aglukark, singer/songwriter and advocate; Desmond Tutu, worked for racial equality; David Suzuki, advocate for environment; Aung San Suu Kyi, human rights activist; Betty Williams and Mairead Corrigan, helped start peace movement in Ireland; Martin Luther King Jr., civil rights activist; Bono, human rights activist; Raffi, children's rights advocate; Mahatma Gandhi, non-violent peace activist; Mother Teresa, human rights advocate; Malala Yousafzai, woman's rights activist</p>					