



Advent Journey

Advent Lutheran Church — January 2009

You are the Light that shines...

Advent Church is...

an exciting multi-cultural congregation that proclaims the gospel, celebrates wonderful music, takes risks, embraces all who enter the church doors, helps teach English to newcomers, gathers together for community meals, explores the heart of the world's great spiritual teachings, offers the sacraments and cares about life in community.

We meet our financial obligations and beyond that, we give money freely to our Synod; to Canadian Lutheran World Relief; and the Lutheran Global Hunger and Development Agency. We offer a place for community organizations to meet and build and grow. We are thankful for the abundance we have to share.

We enjoy excellent ecumenical relationships with the local churches in our area, we have an exciting multi-cultural community garden, and we are known in the neighbourhood as a progressive and life-giving place to be.

Thank you, everyone!

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Congregational Council Tidbits

On January 13 Congregational Council had its first meeting of 2009. As each new year begins we look forward to it with optimism. Suggestions were brought forward for more roof fund-raising events, more ideas for service to the community which includes the Advent community.

By the time you read this Advent Journey the results of the Every Member Visitation should be in and we can start building on that. Results will be conveyed to the congregation as you were all part of this. If you were not contacted please get in touch with Pastor Mills, Claus Brandes or myself. We are trying to update our Membership List with addresses, phone numbers and e-mail addresses during the process.

A reminder that the Annual Meeting will be held March 1, 2009 following the Church Service. The change from a February date to a later date was approved as a by-law change at the Annual Meeting in 2008. The Annual Report will be available to you the Sunday before the meeting.

Are you interested in becoming a member of Congregational Council? We have a few positions to be filled and would welcome volunteers. We all have a variety of God-given talents whether you think that is so or not. When we have a diverse group of people meeting together we can create a lot of energy, generate a lot of good ideas and give each other support to help serve the people of Advent.

Carol Peck,
Council Chairperson

*Sing... Sing... Sing... Sing!!!
All you've got to do is sing!*



The ALC Choir — They pretend rehearsals are for singing , but really, it's mostly about friends.

Michael's Meanderings...

Lately I've been meeting with a new group of local pastors: Fr. Randy Hendricks from St. Timothy's Roman Catholic Church, Rev. Brad Lennon from St. Matthew's Anglican Church and Pastor Terry Talbot from Parkway Forest Community Church. We have tea together and pray and talk about our common ministries. Often we talk about what it is that each of our congregations offers the world. I've put some of the affirming ministries that we have here at Advent Lutheran on the front page of the newsletter.

In all of our conversations, it occurs to me that a healthy church is one that is committed to authentic community. Do people feel at home here? Do they feel welcome? Is this a place where people can trust others and grow in faith? Is the good news of God's love and acceptance proclaimed?

The decline of the North American church is not over. Not by a long shot. But there is hope. As long as we are committed to understanding and responding to the needs of our world we will be a place for people to gather and rejoice. As long as we value questions and free exploration of the mystery of life we will be a place where people can find meaning. As long as we honour differences and encourage participation we will be a place of community.

It's never an easy time to be the church, not in any age, but I give thanks that God has given us a beautiful vision of Christ's kingdom in this time and place, wonderful people, and a fantastic location for ministry to happen. Let's be fearless as we journey together because in God there is nothing that cannot be overcome!

Blessings,
Michael



ADVENT LUTHERAN CHURCH

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The Rev. Michael Mills, Pastor
Sunday Worship at 10:00 a.m.

To receive this newsletter by email,
please send your request to:
journey@adventlutheranchurch.ca

David Rankine has graciously given us permission to reproduce his work in our newsletter.

To see more of his wonderful artwork, check out:
www.davidrankineart.com/index.htm

You are invited to Join the Choir!

All you've got to do is sing! And spend time with friends. If you're looking to polish your English, singing is one of the best ways to do it. Singing is wonderful but this choir really takes socializing very seriously with two annual choir parties.

Rehearsals: Thursdays, 8:00—9:00 p.m..

Usually held at the home of either Heinz and Hildegard Weltner or Peter and Adele Buckley.

For more information, please speak to any member of the choir or Kevyn (you can usually find him near a piano).

Treasurer's Report

ADVENT'S FINANCIAL POSITION — At 31st December, 2008

Our Revenues

Summarized as follows is Advent's giving for 2008, as compared to the full year for 2007.

ADVENT'S GIVING TO 31/12/08

Commitments	Received to 31/12/2008	Received to 31/12/2007	Difference
Current, Festival & Loose	\$81,520.33	\$85,547.09	-\$4,026.76
Mortgage	\$3,919.00	\$4,533.50	-\$614.50
Sunday School	\$0.00	\$21.67	-\$21.67
Sub-total	\$85,439.33	\$90,102.26	-\$4,662.93
Facilities	\$65,931.65	\$65,978.06	-\$46.41
Regular Benevolence	\$10,450.11	\$10,623.00	-\$172.89
Total Received	\$161,821.09	\$166,703.32	-\$4,882.23
Other Giving			
Global Hunger	\$3,497.00	\$4,714.00	-\$1,217.00
Roof Fund	\$16,007.93	\$25,265.61	-\$9,257.68

Current, Festival and Loose Giving

Current, Festival and Loose collections tell us how much we are donating to support our everyday operations (i.e. pay our bills). It is worth noting that for the year at 30th November, 2008, giving was very much in line with 2007 figures. However, December, 2008 saw a marked reduction in giving from December, 2007. Below is the December comparison:

Dates	Current, Festival and Loose 2008	Current, Festival and Loose 2007	% Change
Total to 30 th November	\$69,568.16	\$70,323.12	-1.1 %
Christmas Eve and Christmas Day	\$ 5,773.38	\$ 7,560.25	-23.6 %
Remainder of December	\$ 6,178.79	\$ 7,663.72	-19.2 %
Total Annual	\$81,520.33	\$85,547.09	-4.7 %

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day giving showed a significant decline in 2008 from 2007, as did the remainder of December. The decline for the remainder of December is largely due to the fact that there were 5 Sundays in December, 2007 and only 4 Sundays in December, 2008.

Benevolence Giving

Benevolence giving to 31st December, 2008 has shown an almost identical result to 2007, with a decline of only \$172.89, or 1.6 %. At \$10,450.11, we have surpassed our budgeted commitment of \$10,000 for Regular Benevolence, but fell well short of the \$12,500 that was our goal for 2008.

The Roof Fund

2008 Roof Fund donations totaled \$17,307.93 for the year. The outstanding balance on the roof loan at 30th December, 2008 was \$25,057.16.

Please remember, we make a basic payment of \$1,667 per month toward the loan principal, with any monthly receipts over \$1,667 being used as additional pay-downs for the loan. If our donations totaled \$1,667 per month, we could have the loan paid off by March, 2010. Interest is Prime + 1¼ %.

Therefore, **please don't forget about the Roof Fund** when you prepare your offering envelopes.

Income and Expense Position

Our day-to-day bottom line income and expense position is as follows at 31st October, 2008 (Please note these are preliminary figures, subject to review):

ADVENT INCOME AND EXPENSE - TO DECEMBER 31, 2008			
Category	1-1-08 to 31-12-08	1-1-07 to 31-12-07	Variance
Income			
Current, Festival, Loose	\$81,520	\$85,547	-\$4,027
Mortgage	\$3,919	\$4,534	-\$615
Expense Recover- ies	\$2,174	\$324	\$1,850
Facilities	\$65,932	\$65,978	-\$46
Total Received	\$153,545	\$156,383	-\$2,838
Expenses			
Administration	\$9,170	\$8,165	\$1,005
Building *	\$47,781	\$41,259	\$6,522
ESO	\$1,211	\$350	\$861
Music	\$8,997	\$12,836	-\$3,839
Pastoral Services	\$76,966	\$75,064	\$1,902
Stewardship & Fi- nance	-\$114	\$610	-\$724
Sunday School	\$164	\$171	-\$7
Total Expenses	\$144,175	\$138,455	\$5,720
Net Position	\$9,370	\$17,928	-\$8,558

* Building Excludes Capital Expenditures for Eavestroughs, Fire Panel, etc.

These incomes and expenses reflect our day-to-day undertakings, but exclude the Replacement Reserve allowance of \$7,000, as well as items we are including in the Capital Reserve such as the replacement cost of eaves troughs (\$3,075), and repair and replace the fire alarm panels and detectors (\$1,855).

Our Net Position at 31st December, 2007 was about \$8,600 better than it is today, with virtually all of this variance contained within onerous 2008 Building Major Repairs and Improvements and more than typical early 2008 snow plowing and salting (remember all that snow in January – March and December). These improvements and costs in 2008 included:

Roof and Men's Washroom Repair	\$ 5,125
Snow Plowing in January – March & December	<u>\$ 8,126</u>
TOTAL COST	<u>\$13,251</u>

Fred Roth,
Treasurer

Community Building Task Force

The English Circle

Sundays, 8:30-9:30a.m. Fellowship Hall

This flourishing group has become an established interactive community event in our Peanut neighbourhood. The response we receive from the class is overwhelming. Our numbers are gradually increasing with a new high of twenty on Jan. 11. Language is never a problem when you need to communicate what is already in your soul.

It has been a rewarding experience for all who participate, both those desiring to learn to speak English and those wanting to share what they already know. The lessons for the classes are prepared after consulting the participants.

When curiosity about Canadian Geography was mentioned, a lesson was presented on the Provinces and their capital. Questions about money and finances led to an hour long Money Matters class with Claus Brandes. Interest in learning about Canadian culture and holidays presented several opportunities for joyful learning including pumpkin pie baking and a Christmas party complete with talent show. This highlighted the group's passion for creative expression and singing and dancing have been a theme in classes, too.

Given the passion to learn, many classes are run as semi-formal English classes including the assignment of homework, which is completed by most of the participants. Mercy DeSilva continues to oversee the running of the class with Silke Force now stepping to the fore as the lead instructor. Chathu Peris, a student from A.Y. Jackson Secondary School, has been a volunteer for this Class, and we really appreciate the time donated by this Gr. 10 student. Thanks also to all those who have participated in attendance and as guest instructors and translators.



The English Circle Learns Through Celebration

This isn't a dull classroom. Sharing song, dance, great food and friendship is a wonderful way to learn a new language.

The Never Ending Lunch

This fantastic community bridging activity has started up again, after a short winter recess. For those not in the know, each Sunday after Awakening Class, all those participating in the Community Building Task Force and anyone interested, gets a chance to host a venue for lunch to which everyone at Advent is invited for community fellowship. Look in the Sunday bulletin for each Sunday's exotic location and come on out and join the fun in the spirit of the Sabbath.

Our schedule of hosts is as follows:

Jan 11	Tara Lindemann
Jan 18	Mercy DeSilva
Jan 25	Hildegard Weltner
Feb 1	Peter Reble
Feb.8	Michael Mills
Feb 15	Qi Cheng
Feb 22	Erika and Hannelore Day
Feb 29	Mona Marcobelli
March 8	Sophia Liu.

Advent Journey is created by the members of Advent Lutheran Church. Please submit your news and creations for sharing to any member of Council or email the editor directly at journey@adventlutheranchurch.ca

Next Issue: March 2008

Deadline for submissions: March 11, 2008

Telling the Story of the “Other”

Mention is made here of a future hope of the Task Force that was discussed at our last meeting. It is for the start-up of a forum for the inclusion of and telling of the “other” within the Advent community.

The particular “other” meant here, includes: the other cultures that have been entering the congregation recently, such as that of the recent immigrant; cultures of circumstances who, for no fault of their own, are made to feel unwanted or uncared for by the majority or dominant community; our present members, including our youth, who no longer actively participate in our Sabbath fellowship; and our more senior members who, on their own, struggle with physical challenges to regular participation.

The issue meant to be addressed here is a means to bridge the divide that always exists between people who are not in close personal proximity. The key to building community is the removal of barriers of all kinds between its various members. In Christianity this has been offered to us through the example of the life of Jesus Christ and the Saints of history and today through the presence of the Holy Spirit. But even with all of this help, Christians often portray in their actions a “thinking apart” from people apart from them or different from their own experience and culture (culture here is in the broadest meaning of the term). The members of the Task Force believe the opportunity exists at Advent for its congregants to be pro-active in becoming an interpersonal and intercultural Christian community which fully honours and draws strength from the example of Jesus. The question the Community Building Task Force is mandated to always be asking is how, given the existing context, we can continually facilitate such a progressive development? Keeping these things clearly in view, we look forward to sharing ideas, planning for, and introducing some specific events in the months ahead.



Awakening Class

Sunday mornings after coffee. 11:30 a.m.
in the sanctuary

This informal discussion group is vibrant as ever and serves in its own way for us at Advent to participate in what Martin Luther described as the “priesthood of all believers”. It is an opportunity to explore life’s meaning.

Christian and other religious traditions are drawn on, as well as science, philosophy, personal experience and whatever else we need to make sense of this wonderful, complex, extraordinary world. It is also a great place to practice your English if you are new to Canada.

Meditation Class

We are pleased to introduce a meditation component to our Awakening. This will take place during the last twenty minutes of the one hour given to the Awakening Class.

Quoting Pastor Mills, “Meditation is one of the oldest forms of prayer on earth. It is non-sectarian, meaning that it is not based on any specific religion, and its goal is quite profound: clearing away mental impurities in order to experience true happiness. Through self-observation we journey to the stillness of the soul, achieving a mind full of love and compassion. Meditation helps to increase awareness, overcome delusion, and encourage self-control and foster peace. Beginners and experienced meditators welcome.”

The Light is the Truth

The biggest lie, of course, is that there is a war going on and we are all caught up in it. Don't believe it.

There is no war. The universe is not our enemy. The world cannot be divided into good and bad, right and wrong, my way and your way.

I know Buddhists who adamantly decree that the nature of life on earth is suffering. I know progressive people who sincerely believe that every single Conservative is either stupid or evil or both. I know college administrators who would excommunicate any psychology professor who dared to discuss the teachings of Carl Jung. I know pagans who refuse to consider any other version of Jesus Christ beyond the strange parody the Christian right has fabricated. (1)

And I know myself. I, too, am infected with the lie. We all are. That is how the world trains us: to be fanatical, rigid, and intolerant of those things we don't like. It might be a certain theology that gets us going or a viewpoint on the environment or the peculiar way our partner organizes the closet or how the boss styles her hair. It doesn't take much. Sometimes we secretly wish a whole group of people would get out of the way so that our brand of truth would triumph. We do not like what they are saying or what they are thinking (or what we think they are thinking) or what we imagine they are imagining. "So we allow ourselves to beam hateful, war-like thoughts in their direction." (2) And then our war-like thoughts become manifested in the world and the world feels like a place of war.

And then we go one step further and turn this war on ourselves: judging ourselves, scolding ourselves, commanding perfection, "ignoring reality when it doesn't fit into our neatly constructed theories. Each of us has certain precious beliefs and symbols that we take very seriously and personally and literally. It's a kind of fundamentalism. Oh, our fundamentalism, yours and mine, may not be as dangerous to the collective welfare as, say, the fundamentalism of Islamic terrorists and right-wing Christian politicians. It may not be as destructive as the CEOs who worship financial profit as the supreme measure of value and the scientists who ignore and deny every mystery that can't be measured." (3) But still: We are all infected, you and I.



In reality, we are miracles. Each one of us is a spark of light in a cosmos teeming with light. And I mean teeming with light. It is estimated that there are some 125 billion galaxies in the universe. (4) Each with two hundred billion stars. (5) That's a lot of light. And it can all be traced back, back, back to the beginning to that holy place and time in which we and everything else originated. For in the beginning was the Word. Kind of like a divine idea in the mind and heart of God. This word was with God. The word was God. All things came into being through it. Including you and me, here on

the outer fringe of the Milky Way some fourteen billion years on from that lovely moment but somehow still mysteriously a part of it. All things came into being this way. And without this word, this divine idea, not one thing came into being. And what has come into being was life, and that life is the light of all people.(6) You and me and every person who has ever set foot on the planet throughout history are part of the mystery of light and life.

You could say we are all children of the light.(7) That's what John the evangelist calls us. We have been around since the beginning of time and will be here after the end. "Every day and in every way, we have the opportunity to become more competent playing the mysterious master game we were part of before even the Big Bang bloomed." (8) How do we do that? What do we need to do to shed the lie and get back into that holy dance Christ invited us to dance back in the beginning of time?

Well, for starters, we can take everything less seriously and less personally and less literally. There are way fewer enemies when we cease to be the centre of the universe.

We can laugh at ourselves at least as much as we laugh at other people. We can blaspheme our own theology and burn our own flags and mock our own hypocrisy and satirize our own fads and fixations.

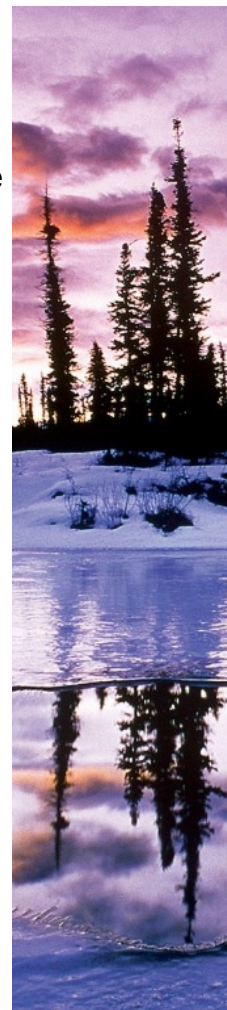
We can enjoy the pleasures of healing mischief, friendly shocks, compassionate tricks, irreverent devotion, holy pranks, playful experiments, and crazy wisdom.

We can be humble enough to understand that it's a crime against life to act like a know-it-all who has everything all figured out.

As much as we might be dismayed at the actions of our political leaders, and church elders and school board overseers, we can remember that toppling any particular junta, clique, or elite is irrelevant unless we overthrow the sour, crippled mass hallucination that is mistakenly called "reality" -- including the part of that hallucination we foster in ourselves that turns divine brothers and sisters into enemies. Remember, we can't change the world unless we change ourselves. The revolution begins at home. If you overthrow yourself again and again, you might earn the right to help overthrow the rest of us.

Here's a quote from Carl Jung: "The best political, social, and spiritual work we can do is to withdraw the projection of our shadow onto others." (9)

Friends, you are all filled with divine light. Remember that. Celebrate that. And help others remember and celebrate, too. Don't put up with those who have wed themselves to the lie. Love them, challenge them to the core of their being and scoop them up in a holy embrace. Be one with Christ. Be one with God. Be one with each other. It is how God imagined us to be.



1. Rob Brezsny, *Pronoia is the Antidote for Paranoia*. (San Raphael, Frog Books, 2005), 150.
2. Brezsny, 153.
3. Brezsny, 150.
4. 1999 Hubble Space Telescope Estimate (NASA).
5. Frommert, H.; Kronberg, C. (August 25, 2005),

6. John 1:1-4.
7. John 12:36.
8. Brezsny, 152.
9. Brezsny, 152.

The Path Ahead...

	ALTAR CARE	GREETER	ASST. MINIS-TER	READER	USHERS	COUNTERS	COFFEE HOSTS
Feb 1			Sean Fromme	Martin Gangadeen	Joe Hunt & Sean Wong		Evelyn Fromme & Robin Sheppard
Feb 8			Erika Schurr	Jonah Mills	Michaela Ehring & Mona Marcobelli		Alice & Martin Hubbes
Feb 15		Arie Fox	Nalini Beekie	Mona Marcobelli	Indira & Nalini Beekie		Brenda Kroeker & Mona Marcobelli
Feb 22		Alex Otten & Lulu Li		Erna Krause	Jason & Renata Sawh		Brit Missirlian
Feb 25		Joan McLean		Hildegard Weltner			
Mar 1		Joyce Tadege		Indira Beekie	Joan & George McLean		Fran & Claus Brandes
Mar 8		Peter Reble		Michaela Ehring	Cristal Bing		The DeSilva Family
Mar 15		Yvonne Cumberbatch		Peter Buckley	Michaela Ehring & Mona Marcobelli		Elizabeth & Guy Lancia
Mar 22		Prihan DeSilva		Peter Reble	Peter & Adele Buckley		Olga Cosburn & Marion Knaus
Mar 29		Tasha Fromme & Ashley Sheppard		Mona Marcobelli	Fred Roth & Sons		Sophie Lui, Qi Chen & Joyce Gao



Toronto Conference Third Annual Christmas/Epiphany Concert

The Chinese Children's Choir,
Combined Choir, Swedish Choir,
Handbell Music, Soloists,
Hymn/Carol Singing

Saturday, January 31, 2009
4:00 p.m.

Agricola Finnish Lutheran Church
25 Old York Mills Road
(Yonge and York Mills)

Refreshments to follow the concert
A freewill offering will go to the
Daily Bread Food Bank

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Sunday Schedule for February And March

8:30 A.M. **English Second Language**
10:00 A.M. **Worship:**
11:30 A.M. **Awakening Class**
12:10 A.M. **Meditation Class**
12:30 P.M. **Never Ending Lunch**

Important Days Coming Up

Transfiguration Sunday – February 22
Ash Wednesday – February 25
Lent begins – March 1

Annual Meeting

March 1, 2009 in Fellowship Hall
following worship. See you there!

The Buzz



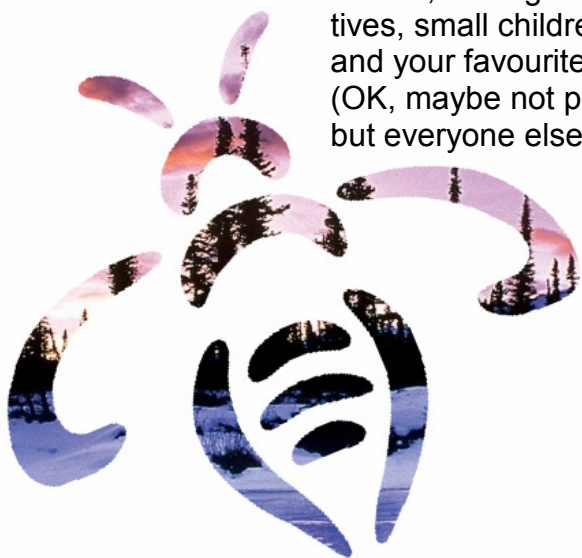
New Notice Board

Hildegard and Heinz Weltner have skillfully and artistically built and installed a notice board at the entrance to our building. Its sole purpose is to tell visitors about the congregation of Advent Lutheran Church and to highlight our regular activities.

Many thanks to Heinz and Hildegard for helping Advent be more noticeable to newcomers and visitors to our spiritual abode.

Never Ending Lunch

Is back in session – we head off after Awakening Class and Meditation Class (around 12:30). Anyone and everyone is welcome - as are friends, visiting relatives, small children and your favourite pet. (OK, maybe not pets, but everyone else).



The English Circle

- an English Language Class for Newcomers

Each week Advent Lutheran Church hosts an English Class for new comers to Canada. These classes use different aspects of Canadian Culture to help teach English. If you are interested in attending the class or know someone who is, please talk to Mercy De Silva, Peter Reble or Pastor Mills. If you are interested in joining the wonderful group of volunteers who help out from time to time, that would be wonderful! **Sunday morning 8:30-9:30.**

PRAYERS FOR OUR PEOPLE

We pray for our world, and open our hearts to the goodness that is all around us. We give thanks for the abundance that comes to our tables from the good soil; we give thanks for the diversity of life on this planet; we give thanks for the freedom to speak and think and act in accordance with our conscience.

We pray, too, for the people in our community: the unemployed, those weary of work, those who face discrimination and those coping with illness and disease. Especially we pray for our brothers and sister here at Advent, especially Alfred Schurr who is at home from hospital, Thyla Munro who suffers ill health and Rose Shave who mourns. Many in our community struggle quietly, and we pray that they might have strength and courage.

We also pray for those who have big decisions to make: whether to have surgery or not, or to change jobs, or return to study and retrain, or shift house, or to stay in a difficult marriage, move across the country or overseas, or to take legal action against an injustice.

Bless us all, loving God, with time to celebrate and enjoy life. May we honour our friendships and our relationships and our marriages. May we delight in our children and all the children in our lives; may we have eyes to see the love that is around us and the love that is in us to share with others.

Thanks be to God.



The Kitchen is Cookin'!

Thanks to Danny Schickedanz, we have a lovely stove in our Fellowship Kitchen.

*A man
should
learn
to detect
and watch
that gleam
of light
which
flashes
across
his mind
from
within.*



~Ralph Waldo Emerson