

WE CAN CONNECT



VOL. 1, ISSUE 36

NOVEMBER 22, 2020

Crismon Memory Tree

Each year at Okotoks and De Winton, we decorate our sanctuary with Christmas Trees and other decorations that symbolize the season and the birth of Christ. Of course, this is a very different year with no in-person worship in the De Winton church building and limited numbers at worship in Okotoks.

This year we will be decorating the sanctuary at Okotoks where traditionally we would hang Crismons (symbols of Christ) on the trees and then light them for the first Sunday of Advent.

One of the special trees over the years has been the Memory Tree where people would hang a Crismon on a tree for someone special they had lost recently. This year we will have a Memory Tree for family members or dear friends who have died in the last two years. The process for honouring these people will be a little different.

I am asking that you send the name of your loved one to me (okjulia@telus.net) and I will create a list of names for the Memory Tree. On November 29 someone will be at the tree putting on crismons while I read the list of names of people we are honouring. If you not at the service you can still watch the service via Zoom and see the crismon being placed on the tree.

Now, more than ever we want to honour what traditions we can even in the midst of changing times. Consider "hanging" a crismon in your loved one's honour. Please have your names in by Thursday, November 26th.



Please Pray For:



- Morley-Eden Valley United Church
- Health care workers
- Those who are facing financial uncertainty
- People working and living in long term care facilities
- Those who are homeless

In-person Worship Seating Registration Reminder

In order not to exceed our minimum numbers, you will be asked to register to attend the service. Each week, you may phone the office (403-938-4357) or email (okunited@telus.net) to register for the upcoming Sunday. Seating will be assigned. If we exceed the number allowed you will be placed on the list for the following week. You may also register for a week you wish to attend, but will not be able to register for more than one to allow everyone equal opportunity to come. We hope that you will register and not hesitate because you think someone else needs to go more than you. We want everyone to have an opportunity to attend who wants to. You may not be able to attend weekly but we hope that most people who want to will be able to attend regularly. And if you know some others with whom you'd like to attend, give them a call and ask them to register for the same Sunday.

November Worship Themes

About 10 years ago, a little book entitled "Help, Thanks, Wow: The Three Essential Prayers," written by author Anne Lamott came out to critical acclaim and became a best seller. In November we will be exploring these themes each Sunday, with the addition of a fourth prayer, "Sorry." Please join us in person or via Zoom to discover what it means to pray in these challenging times and how we might engage these compelling prayers for ourselves and for the world.

November 22nd: Wow! (What amazes us? How do we acknowledge God in those moments?)

November 29th is the beginning of Advent. On that day we will begin our journey toward Christmas and explore what it looks like in the current environment. Our theme for Advent this year will be "Hope." On the 29th we will also light our sanctuary, including the **Memory Tree**. If you have lost someone dear to you in the last two years, we invite you to let us know their name and we will place a chrismon on the tree in their name while their names are read out during the service. More details to follow.



Sorry

This past Sunday I suggested that “sorry” was one of the most essential and powerful prayers we could pray in order to be free and whole. We will continue to destroy each other and the planet until we recognize and change our ways. It is imperative that we’re willing to admit to our mistakes and turn ourselves around. One of the roadblocks, however, to doing this is the biases that creep into our thinking which prevent us from understanding why we do the things we do. In order to recognize our “sin,” which simply means that we are “missing the mark” of who we are meant to be, we need to admit to our biases and somehow find ways to mitigate their effects. For that to happen, we need to truly reflect on our lives and the lens through which we see and understand things. Just as many of us have cleaned our physical homes during this time of semi-isolation, we also need to clean up our spiritual homes, that is, our inner lives.

We have much for which we need to apologize to God. Even if we don’t always know why we do what we do, we are causing damage. We must admit this before we can truly accept God’s forgiveness and live in freedom and joy.

We all see the world through a certain lens which skews our perceptions and distorts reality. I recently told someone that we are all wrong, we just don’t know *how* wrong we are. The reality is, we don’t function by reason, even when we think we are. We act and think according to our beliefs and feelings. Knowing this encourages us to explore our beliefs and change if need be. We are not God, we are fallible human beings. Saying “sorry” and truly meaning it can be one of the most transformative prayers we can pray for it opens us up to God to work in us to transform us.

The following are a list of biases suggested by Brian McLaren from the podcast “Learning How to See: Brian McLaren and Jacqui Lewis with Richard Rohr, Episode 6: Seeing, Doubt, Contemplation and Action” <https://cac.org/podcast/learning-how-to-see/>

Take a look and see where your biases have caused you to think a certain way or believe certain things. Then determine what you need to do as correctives to your biases.

Our Biases

1. Confirmation Bias. The human brain welcomes information that confirms what it already thinks and resists information that disturbs or contradicts what it already thinks.
2. Complexity Bias. The human brain prefers a simple lie to a complex truth. Truth is often far more complex than accepting the simple lie we’re offered. And often we want to believe the lie and not search for the truth.
3. Community Bias. Our brains find it hard to see or challenge anything that will get us in trouble with the group that we belong to or that we cherish.
4. Complementarity Bias. If people are nice to us then we’ll be open to what they say. If we don’t perceive them as liking us or being nice to us, we’ll be biased against what they say.
5. Contact Bias. If you lack contact with someone, you will not be able to see what they see. (LGBTQ community, Black Community, Immigrants)
6. Political Biases. We believe what our group believes and we flock with those who see as we do. We don’t even try to understand another perspective.
7. Consciousness Bias. We can only see from a location. From our own level of maturity or consciousness.
8. Competency Bias. Our brains like to think of ourselves as above average. As a result we either underestimate our incompetence and sometimes our competence or we see others as incompetent.
9. Confidence Bias. We prefer a confident lie to a hesitant truth.
10. Conspiracy Bias. When we feel shame, we are vulnerable to stories that cast us as victims of some evil conspiracy.
11. Comfort Bias. We welcome data that lets us relax, think we’re OK.
12. Catastrophe Bias. We are prone to seeing things that are perceived to be immediately and disastrously dangerous but the slow-coming change we find easy to ignore.
13. Cash Bias. We see what brings in the money and if we see that something might cost us something or might not be financially profitable, it’s easy for us to discount it.

Perhaps we can take some time to consider our biases and how they might possibly do damage, to ourselves and others. We will heal the world only as we heal ourselves.

May God bless us on our journey.

Julia



White Gifts This Christmas

As we are all aware, this year has been challenging and while we have hope for the possibility of a vaccine for the coming year, we don't know when this will be and what challenges people will face in 2021.

In the past we have had a White Gift Sunday, usually Pageant Sunday, where we offered gift cards for the Benevolent Fund. We are going to continue that tradition this year but ask that you drop your gift cards off at the church office, mail them in or drop them in the offering if you attend Sunday worship in person.

The gift cards will go to the Benevolent Fund to distribute as needed. The cards most used are grocery and gas cards. Please make sure you note your name and envelope number (if you have one) on the envelope. Or, just use a regular offering envelope for the cards. The donation will be noted on your tax receipts for 2020.

We will be taking gift cards up until the end of December. Thank you in advance for your contribution. You are a generous community. I hear it all the time from the wider community.

ST. ANDREW'S UNITED CHURCH HAPPENINGS Written by P. Marie Wedderburn



For a few years now, St. Andrew's United has hosted and enjoyed a Christmas concert with the money raised by selling tickets going to support a charity the community of faith has decided upon. This year's concert will of course be different because of COVID-19.

The first way this year's concert will be different is that it will be held virtually on Sunday, December 13 at 7 p.m. via Zoom and will feature many of the same musicians that we have heard in the past.

The second way this year's concert will be different is that tickets will not be sold. This year St. Andrew's United Church has decided to support the Veterans' Association Food Bank of Calgary.

So if you would like to financially support the concert and to make it easier for everyone, you can do so in one of three ways: send a cheque to Okotoks United Church, give cash to Okotoks United Church, or arrange an e-transfer to Okotoks United Church. Whichever way you may decide to support the concert, please ear-mark your donations for the concert. Then the total of all these donations will be forwarded to St. Andrew's United Church's treasurer who will then send a cheque to the Veterans' Association Food Bank of Calgary.

Hope to see you at the concert on December 13th and thank you, if you are able, for financially supporting this annual event.



Turkey-To-Go Thank You



Thank you to everyone who bought dinners and then showed up at our drive-through to pick them up. Thank you to Chris at Highwood Catering for his excellent meal. Thank you to our diligent and enthusiastic ticket seller, Diane. Thanks to the men who carved the turkeys and the women who packed up the containers. Thanks to our Cole Slaw maker, Pie Bakers, Pie Slicers and Pie Packers. Thanks to Rev. Julia, our greeter and to all the teams of runners who assembled the orders with the help of our pie and coleslaw distributors and delivered them to the vehicles. As you can see it was an amazing operation and we are so



COVID-19 UPDATE FROM THE BOARD

Our Board is continuing to keep COVID-19 planning at the top of its agenda. We are keeping current with the guidelines of the United Church of Canada, Chinook Winds Region and Alberta Health Services in order to keep our community of faith strong, connected and safe. As you know we recently reopened the church building to limited activities. With the increasing number of cases in Alberta as a whole and Okotoks in particular, we are being careful in what we do in our building. With that in mind, we have decided on the following plan for the next few months:

- **In-person worship services** will continue at present with the Zoom option for those who wish to worship from home. Thank you to everyone who attends in person for following the strict guidelines in place. You are helping to keep us open.
- **Church and Community User Groups** may apply to use the building after reviewing our protocols and completing a COVID-19 safety plan for their activity.
- **Christmas Eve Services** will be entirely on Zoom. Rev. Julia needs to plan well in advance for that service and we don't know what the COVID-19 situation will be at that time. It will be different but still special. Stay tuned....
- **Youth and Children's Ministries:** In order to keep more of our kids connected and still safe, Candice will be reverting to Zoom-only Sunday School following our morning worship service. The youth group will meet every Friday but one week it will be a one-hour in-person meeting at the church and the next it will be a one-hour Zoom meeting. Candice is very aware of COVID-19 precautions and is diligently working within the guidelines. Unfortunately, the **Christmas Pageant** will not be presented this year. We look forward to a Christmas in the not too distant future when we can all gather with the kids and their extended families to participate in that long-standing and fun tradition.

As you all know this is a constantly changing situation. **Any of the above plans may change with short notice.** We will continue to keep you informed. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call Karen Pryznyk any time.

Kid's Korner:

We will be having Zoom-only Sunday School following our morning worship service. Youth group will meet every Friday but one week will be a one-hour in person meeting and one week will be a one-hour Zoom meeting.

Please remember we will be practicing social distancing and wearing masks, so please remember to bring one. Also, a reminder that the nursery is closed during this time. Any questions, please contact Candice at cndcsutton@gmail.com.





WHERE TO GIVE THIS CHRISTMAS!

Several organizations provide Christmas support to residents in the Foothills region.

Please contact them for details on how or what you can give or volunteer.

Please donate by Dec. 4

Donate Early!

Oilfields Food Bank: 403-612-1291

Christmas Meal Hampers. Donations of food and cash are gratefully accepted.

Okotoks Food Bank: 403-651-6629

Christmas Meal Hampers. Donations of food and cash are gratefully accepted. You may also choose to Adopt-a-Family.

Baby It's Cold Outside: 403-660-3648

Christmas Meal Hampers to nominated residents. Donations of food and cash.

The Salvation Army: 403-652-2195

Christmas Meal Hampers. Toys & gifts for children (18 and under). Donations of new, unwrapped toys and gift cards are gratefully accepted. Financial donations welcome. *Volunteers needed!*

Seniors Secret Service: 403-257-8339

Supporting isolated seniors throughout the Foothills. Donations of cash or gift cards.

Magic of Christmas:

403-921-0588/403-803-3085

Christmas cheer and gifts to referred residents. Donations of cash and gift cards are appreciated or donate new, unwrapped toys at:

OKOTOKS: ATB, Fountain Tire, Village Lane Dental, Monkey Mountain, Papillon Medical Clinic, Fisher Crescent Retail, White Bull.

HIGHRIVER: Dance Tech, Ward Tires

BLACK DIAMOND: ATB, Focus Fitness, Western Financial

My City Care:

mycitycareoko@myvictory.ca

Toys & gifts for children, teens & parents. Drop off a new unwrapped toy or stocking stuffer at one of these drop-off locations: Trident Auto Wash, Momentum Physical Therapy, Eyes 360

Volunteers Needed!

Okotoks Family Resource Centre:

C:403-995-2626 E: familyresources@okotoks.ca

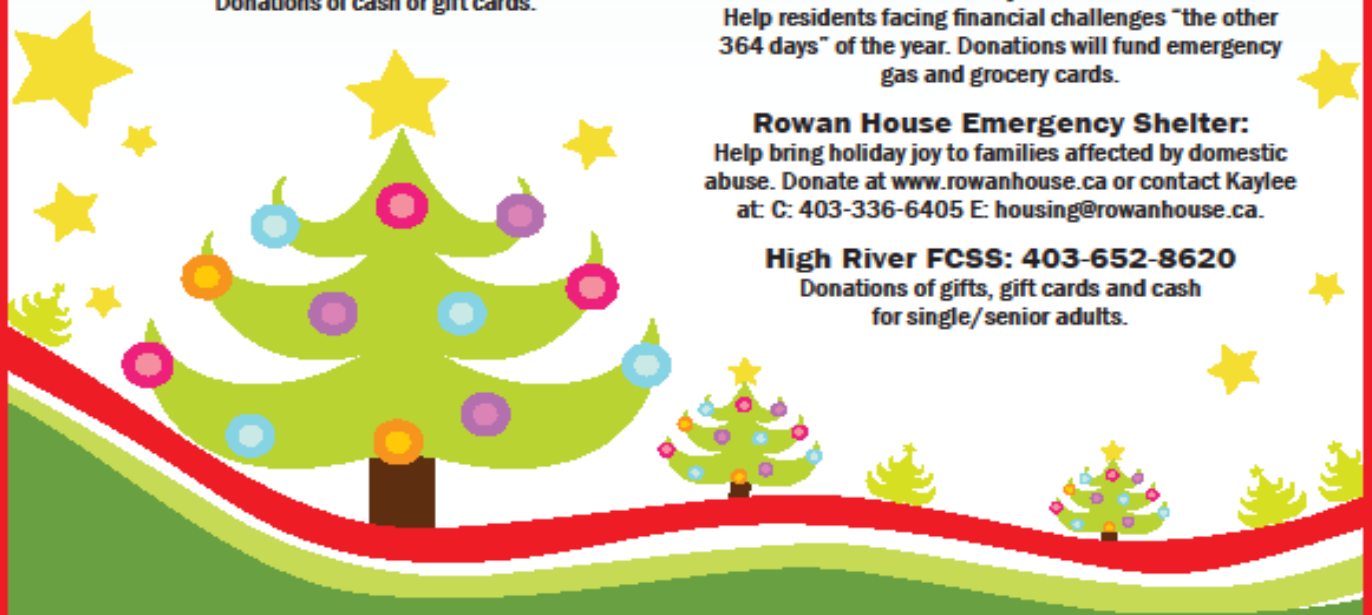
Help residents facing financial challenges "the other 364 days" of the year. Donations will fund emergency gas and grocery cards.

Rowan House Emergency Shelter:

Help bring holiday joy to families affected by domestic abuse. Donate at www.rowanhouse.ca or contact Kaylee at: C: 403-336-6405 E: housing@rowanhouse.ca.

High River FCSS: 403-652-8620

Donations of gifts, gift cards and cash for single/senior adults.





FOODBANK
COOKBOOK FUNDRAISER
Celebrating 35 years of community service

FOOD
a simple connection
Recipes to gather around

Okotoks Foodbank celebrates 35 years of community service

All proceeds from the cookbook go to the Okotoks Foodbank.
Cookbooks can be purchased online at okotoksfbcookbook.ca
OR
at the Okotoks Foodbank, 220 Stockton Avenue
403-651-6629
\$40

Okotoks United Church Office - We're here for you!
The office continues to remain open at this time Monday to Friday 9:00 - 2:00. Please contact Diane at okunited@telus.net or 403-938-4357 for church related news.

Please contact **Julia** at okjulia@telus.net or 403-702-2249 (cell) at any time.

Congregational Care Team invites you to reach out for confidential spiritual and compassionate care by email at: okcongregationalcare@telus.net

Please refer to our website www.okunited.ca for updated information and links to the newsletter.