ISSUE
006
December
2024

YOUR REGULAR SOURCE OF EVENTS, HAPPENINGS, AND INFORMATION

St. John's Today

this issue

Christmas Praise & Wonder P.1
Giving, Singing & Memories P.2
Chilling Walk & Interesting Reads P.3
Community & Upcoming Events P.4

Celebrations

Congratulations to the ecumenical team who put together the **Sounds of Christmas** with over $6600 raised for the Hamper Drive.

Our support goes out to the annual Salvation Army Kettle Campaign. Volunteers still welcome. A worthy effort for a worthy cause.

Happenings

Happenings around the parish.

- **Kettle Campaign** – Nov. 15th until Christmas – Volunteers needed. Contact Mary Lynn Wilson 613-283-3563.
- **Parish Council** Meetings – Dec. 18th and Jan. 22nd.
- **Keenagers** – 2nd and 4th Tuesdays, every month at 10 to 11 a.m. – Civitan Hall.
- **Pray K7A** – Dec. 29th @ 7:00 p.m. – St. Johns Anglican Church, George St. S.
- **Community Games Night** – Jan. 3rd, Food @ 5:30, Games start 6:30.

If you have any events you would like to have posted here you can drop us a line at: stjohns.smithsfalls@gmail.com

The Sounds of Christmas!

Early in the evening of November 24th at Bethel Pentecostal Church, Smiths Falls, the latest edition of the **Sounds of Christmas** event was held. This annual ecumenical gathering celebrating the Christmas season with lessons and song was held in support of the Salvation Army Hamper Drive and doubled as the November PrayK7A gathering.

Participating were parishioners and clergy of Bethel Pentecostal Church, Calvary Bible Church, Salvation Army Mississippi-Rideau Lakes Corps, St. Johns Anglican Church, and Westminster Presbyterian Church. Each provided a reading or message and a musical number in praise of the Lord. St. John's own choir offered up an inspiring rendition of Hallelujah!

It was a successful reflection on the joy and wonders of the gift of the Christ child born onto us over two thousand years ago. The spirit of the season filled the room, with the generosity of the attendees coming together to raise a record-breaking free-will donation in excess of $6,600 for the Hamper program.

Snacks and fellowship followed in the hall.

The Wonder of Christmas

Have you ever felt like the holiday season is a bit of a double-edged sword? On one hand, it's filled with joy and anticipation, but on the other, it can bring stress, loneliness, and even sadness.

We've all been there and know how challenging it can be. Mental health issues and spiritual challenges are often heightened over the holidays.

Let's be clear: There's no shame in struggling during what's supposed to be "the most wonderful time of the year." In fact, acknowledging these feelings is the first step towards finding joy in the midst of difficulty.

You see, while some families are living out their own personal Hallmark movies, others are grappling with fractured relationships and painful or sorrowful memories. It's a stark contrast that can leave us feeling isolated and cynical - but it doesn't have to be this way!

With intentionality, the right perspective, and dependence on the Holy Spirit we can guard our hearts against negativity and lift our spirits during this season.

(continue on Pg. 3 – Wonder)

Yummy Pastoral Giving

An important part of Christmas at St. John's is reaching out to our community with gift bags, gift cards and cookies.

The baking of cookies for parishioners in long term care homes, or in private homes, who have difficulty getting to Church has been going on for many years.

This year it has been so very successful with the filling of over 40 boxes which have been delivered. In addition, extra tins have been filled and delivered to Shardon Manor, Victoria House and the Armstrong Building (former Willowdale).

For many years gift bags/gift cards have been given to Shardon Manor and Victoria House. This year we continued with Giant Tiger gift cards to both of these homes. As well, we have given gift bags with hats, mitts, socks, deodorant, toothpaste, brush, notebook, pens, plus Food Basics gift cards to the folks at the Armstrong Building.

All of these projects have been completed with the very generous donation of $1750 from our parish Outreach Committee.

We know that all of these gifts are gratefully appreciated! Such delicious cookies!!! Many thanks to all our cookie-bakers and packers. *(K. Porter)*

Terry Dillabough

Debbie Lewis

Kevin Lewis

Mike McCulloch

Dan Theriault

Meet the Creche Crew. They braved ever changing weather to get us our nativity scene…

Choral Christmas

Choristers from St. John's were offered the opportunity to share some Christmas cheer at the Heritage House Museum event on Dec 1st.

A small group sang carols in the parlour and encouraged passing folks to join in. There were many families with young children who seemed to especially enjoy the music.

While singers took a mid-event break, Sterling Bennett played seasonal favourites on his keyboard. Fun was had by all and our offering added to the festive atmosphere of the day. *(T. Warren, Photo: L. Porter)*

On another choral note, there was an ecumenical event for any and all on the evening of December 12th at the Town Hall Gazebo in Smiths Falls. This Christmas Hymn and Story Night was set for 7 p.m. Although the wind was bitter, the hot drinks and baking helped keep the chill off.

Closer to home, in the parish of St. John the Evangelist, we are ramping up our joyful noises of the season.

Scheduled for Sunday, December 15th at 4 p.m. is the Nine Lessons and Carols service. All welcome. *(D. Willis)*

Do You Remember?

A few years (possibly a decade or two or more) ago the St. John's youth group was doing some impressive crafting. Some of this artwork we would like to revive today. Do you recognize the figurines in the photo?

At least one of our current parishioners was in the group. But she cannot recall who else was in the group or who made them.

What do you remember or who do you know that does? Can you help us out with this nativity mystery?

If you have any information, please email us at the newsletter stjohns.smithsfalls@gmail.com with the words "*Mystery Figurines*" in the title. Thank you. *(K. Porter, D. Willis)*

Intrepid Walkers

(continued from page 1 – Wonder)

Psalm 103:2-5 says,

Praise the Lord, my soul,
And forget not all His benefits-
Who forgives all your sins
And heals all your diseases,
Who redeems your life from the pit
And crowns you with love and compassion,
Satisfies your desires with good things
So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Remembrance is one of the most powerful positions taken when facing an emotionally challenging season.

In the Old Testament the Israelites would set up stones of remembrance in the places where God did great miracles. Whenever they would travel past these stones, they could look and remember the things the Lord had done in that place.

"be thankful unto Him, bless His name"

How about us? We can recount seasons and situations in our lives where God came through for us and did a miracle. Writing them down and pondering them lifts our spirits so we can praise our Heavenly Father despite our feelings. Meeting Jesus, the One who died for our sins and through whom we can have access to Father God might be the first moment worthy of remembering!

From Psalm 100 we learn being thankful is the fruit of humility.

Giving thanks is a lifestyle. It is the cure for arrogance, the inoculation for depression and it's a force against the spirit of entitlement.

Learning to express thankfulness daily, especially out loud, is essential to a spirit filled life!

(further explored on pg. 4 Community)

This Month's Interesting Read

Practicing The Way:

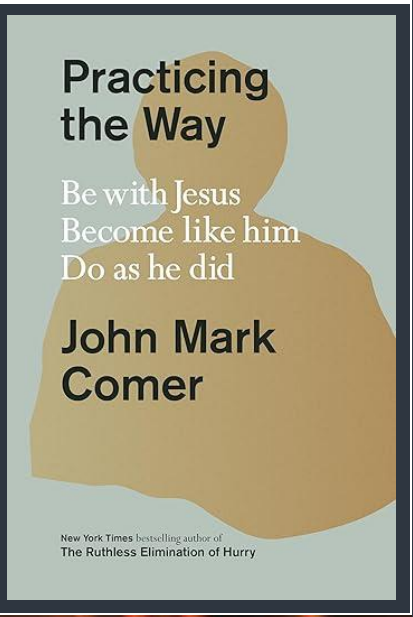
Be like Jesus. Become Like Him. Do as he did.

Authored by John Mark Comer.

To live by what the first Christian disciples called a Rule of Life - a set of practices and relational rhythms that slow us down and open up space in our daily lives for God to do what *only* God can do.

These ancient practices have much to offer us. By learning to rearrange our days, we can follow the Way of Jesus.

Available on Amazon.ca and on Indigo.ca (L. Porter)



Ecumenical Walk

Celebrating Advent

On a cold and blustery Sunday afternoon in early December (December 8th), a hardy, dedicated group of revelers gathered together to celebrate Advent and honour the coming Christ child commemorated by the season of Christmas. It was the next edition of the Annual Ecumenical Advent Walk.

The walk was open to any and all who cared to participate. Everyone who came out was given a candle to share the light of Christ and bells to make a joyful noise. In all twelve souls braved the frigid wind, icy sidewalks and the growing cold as the sun set.

The launch point for the walk was St. Francis de Sales Roman Catholic church. When all were assembled, shortly after 4 p.m., the event opened with a prayer of gathering and thanksgiving.

At each stop a volunteer would read aloud the selected bible passage, beginning with God's covenant to his chosen nation, and running through the promises of the prophets to the immaculate blessing bestowed upon Mary. The reading would be followed by a prayer reflecting the passage just read.

Stops along the way included, in order, St. Francis, Holy Trinity United Church, First Baptist Church, Westminster Presbyterian Church, the site of the old Mission on Beckwith St., Assemblies of God Church on William St. The final stop on the pilgrimage was St. Johns Anglican church on George St, where the twelve were revived with hot cocoa, cider, and ginger snaps. *(D. Willis)*

The Giving-Thanks Lifestyle in Community

(Continued from Pg. 3)

Start with thankfulness for food, shelter, and especially for being able to connect with our church family and community.

A common pain point for many people during the Holidays is the feeling of loneliness. Knowing others are gathering together and enjoying time together can press the wound of anyone struggling with loneliness, causing a real temptation to isolate and wallow in misery.

Each of us has a deep need to feel we belong and are accepted. A need for community and connection. The challenge is to call someone when the temptation to isolate occurs, find someone to have a coffee with, or lunch.

Galatians 6:2 says, *"Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ"*.

Don't deny someone the chance to love and care for you!

Whether the holidays are "the most wonderful time of the year" or you want to fall asleep and wake up in April (hibernate? Isolate) try listening to the Spirit, lean into God and be encouraged by what He wants to do in each of our hearts this season.

May each of us meet Jesus in a new and fresh way.

(C. Kerfoot)

Upcoming Events

- **Parish Council.**
  Next council meeting is Wednesday, December 18th at 7 p.m. in the Parish Hall. In January, the meeting will be on Wednesday, January 15th at 7 p.m. in the Parish Hall.

- **Keenagers.**
  Hosted by the First Baptist Church, this is a fellowship time of prayer, scripture reading, music and guest speakers for individuals 55+. The Smiths Falls Civitan Club. Every 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month from 10 a.m.-11am. All are welcome. Anyone needing a ride may contact Eric Wills 613-283-7007.

- **Salvation Army Kettle Campaign.**
  The Salvation Army is recruiting volunteers for the Kettle Campaign which is already underway. It runs until December 25th. To volunteer or for more information, contact Mary Lynn Wilson (613)283-3563.

- **Pray K7A.**
  On the last Sunday of each month, the local Christian community gathers together for shared fellowship and prayers. It will be held on December 29th starting at 7 p.m. at St. John The Evangelist Anglican Church, 2 George St. South, Smith's Falls, ON, K7A 1X4.

- **Games Night.**
  Games nights happen regularly each month, starting at 5:30 p.m. in the Parish Hall. The next games night is on Friday, January 3, starting with food at 5:30 and games at 6:30 p.m.

- **175th Anniversary Events.**
  Stay tuned as the Anniversary Team adds special events and activities throughout the Fall.

- **Future Editions.**
  January 2024 – new beginnings, Winter events and more.

Times of Worship:

Sundays:
- 8 a.m. spoken eucharist.
- 10 a.m. sung eucharist.

Wednesdays:
- 10 a.m. weekday eucharist.

Holiday Services:
- Dec 24th,
  - 7 p.m. Family
  - 11 p.m. Sung
- Dec 25th,
  - 10 a.m., said
- Dec 29th, as normal

Parish Office:
- 9 a.m. to noon, weekdays (613)283-1261

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST
SMITHS FALLS | 175 YEARS | 1849-2024

St. John The Evangelist,
Anglican Church

2 George St. South,
Smiths Falls, ON, K7A 1X4
613.283.1261 ph
https://www.stjohn-smithsfalls.com/

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