

Mill Woods United Church
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'Connections'

December 2013

A little child,
A shining star.
A stable rude,
The door ajar.
Yet in that place,
So crude, forlorn,
The hope of all
The world was born.

- Author unknown

Christmas..... Already?

It's amazing how fast the year has flown by isn't it and not to mention a little scary. Well no matter, December is here again and with it the Christmas season. I know it's the Christmas season without a calendar simply because all the commercials and the mound of ads arriving daily with the paper.

With the season will come all the controversies that have lain dormant since January, whether to wish someone a Merry Christmas or Happy Holidays. Should public schools have Christmas Concerts or Winter Season Concerts? All those debates that flood the letters to the editor pages and take attention away from the actual reason for the season.

Well I do my best not to let it get to me, it is still my favorite season of the winter and it comes alive each year with memories of the past and anticipation of new memories to come. I have been very fortunate to have grown up in a close family environment and those memories of Christmas long ago still come to life. The neighborhood potluck on Christmas Eve

that kept the young ones distracted on that long night before the big day. The first time we went to the midnight service at Robertson-Wesley and how in those days if you weren't there by 10 p.m. you didn't get a seat. Later years driving slowly home from Church, viewing the lights in old Glenora, arriving home and lighting the fireplace and sipping champagne to toast my mother's birthday which is December 25th.

I am also fortunate to have my own family now and we have grown our own Christmas traditions some a blend of Lesley's and mine and some

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Christmas..... Already? Continued ...

totally new ones created by all of us. It's a special time of year which survives the assault of commercialism which seems to get stronger every year.

The Christmas season is also a good time to look back at the past year and give thanks for all the gifts I have received throughout the year. A time to go and say thank you to someone special or someone that has done something that stands out in my mind from the year gone by. The thank you can be in the form of a gift or in a verbal thanks, both of which are meaningful and heartfelt.

I would like to extend a special Thank You to the community of Mill Woods United Church. As a community you came together and met the challenge of the last year. You kept the faith and showed your support for all who stepped into leading worship. You filled out surveys and provided valuable feedback to the Joint Needs Assessment Committee and then patiently supported the committee while they dealt with the delays. Our community members stepped forward to be the Search Committee and again patience and faith were the rule of the day as you gave the committee room to work and encouragement to choose the best candidate for our congregation instead of settling for someone we could "live with". Now we wait patiently to meet our new minister in January, a reward, if you will, for our patience and faith in one another.

I hope this Christmas season is a meaningful and special time of year for you and your families. I hope there are memories awoken that will warm your heart and stories you can share with your friends and families of Christmas past and an eagerness for Christmas future. Take time to consider the real meaning of Christmas and tune out the commercial hype that makes the season all about material giving.

Thank you again, and Merry Christmas

Paul Verdin
Council Chair



To Touch Our Souls

Come join in our fun Ladies 'Evening
No cost to participate!

- Walk the Labyrinth
- Listen to a Life Coach
- Personal Trainer session
- Variety of Workshops/Games
- Movie & popcorn in pyjamas
- Yoga & Breakfast in morning

January 18 - 19, 2014 - 6:30 p.m. until church the next morning
Contact Mary-Anne Janewski at 780 951 9867 for more information

Loving Like Christ

White Gift Sunday - December 8

Each year we gather gifts wrapped in white paper that are donated to the Bissell Centre, a United Church Outreach Ministry in downtown Edmonton.

The items are collected for **Festive Giveaway**, an event that Bissell Centre puts on annually to allow families to pick out items to have as gifts under their trees this Christmas.

This year suggested gifts include:
(new items only please)

- Adult and children's clothing, socks & undergarments
- Adult and children winter outer wear
- Books (reading and colouring)
- DVD's & VHS Videos
- Games and toys for all ages
- Stuffedies, plush toys, or teddy bears
- Household/family items
- Christmas decorations
- Wrapping paper
- Blankets

Advent Worship Services

Rev. Carolyn Nicholson will be leading all the Advent services.

Dec. 1, 10:30 am Advent 1 - Hope

Dec. 8, 10:30 am Advent 2 - Peace
White Gift Sunday

Dec. 15, 10:30 am Advent 3 - Joy

Dec. 22, 10:30 am Advent 4 - Love



Food and Clothing Bank

The Food/Clothing Bank depot here at Mill Woods provided food assistance for 100 families during the month of October. We operate Tuesday & Thursday evenings from 5:30 – 6:30 p.m. Our volunteers are an amazing group who come from both within our church family and the community.

I would like to acknowledge three folks who have been with us for many years. Dave Brundage, Joyce Miller and Cathy Trieber have manned the 3rd Thursday of the month spot for a long time now. They were active members of our church until they moved away from the Mill Woods area. They have remained faithful to their commitment with us missing a day only when the weather and roads make it impossible to travel into the city or other emergency.

Cristina Chara and Cathy Dubeau are two new volunteers who have recently joined us in the Clothing Bank. Thanks to all of you! We are very happy to have you!

With the sudden onset of winter, we are in dire need of warm winter clothing for men, women and especially children. We have been very busy lately with stuff flying off the

shelves. Please remember us if you are getting rid of an old coat or outer wear, boots etc. your kids have outgrown – our stock is very low.

If you don't have any large items, a pair of mitts, scarf or hat for the "Mitten Tree" would be appreciated. Any of these items can be dropped off at the church during office hours, Food/Clothing Bank hours, in the evening when you come to a meeting or on Sunday morning. We will make sure they get to where they need to go.

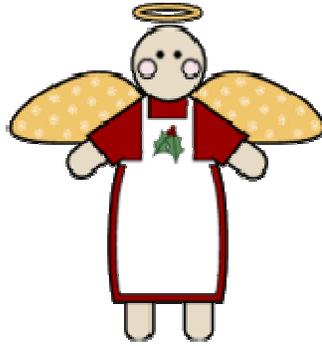
When asked what her favorite qualities in a volunteer were Marjorie Bencz, the Executive Director of the Edmonton Food Bank, responded by saying "dependability, predictability, reliability and trustworthiness". These are qualities that all our volunteers have as well as a great sense of humour. Thank you to every single one of you – we are very blessed to have you! We couldn't do what we do without you!

If you would like to join our group or would like more information on who we are and what we do please call Kathy Poechman at 780 463-7750.



Heavenly Hospitality

Fall is always a busy time of the year for our committee. This year we organized the meal for the Family Community Dinner in September. This event was planned to encourage those outside our



congregation to come and learn more about our church. A meal with pulled pork in a bun was cooked and served as our church community welcomed those who attended from the surrounding neighbourhood. It was a successful evening enjoyed by all.

In late September we catered two days of meetings for a Conference Committee providing coffee and goodies as well as a lunch and supper. Mid October we had a pie making day and made 50 apple pies to be sold at the Christmas Craft Fair. Then the first weekend in November we catered “coffee time” at St. Paul’s United Church Ladies’ Day Out Program. This promoted a positive connection between our churches and our committee hopes this will lead to future catering possibilities.

This past weekend we ran the concession for our Christmas Craft Fair. Thanks to everyone who stopped by for lunch!

The first week in December we cater a Christmas Dinner luncheon for Presbytery Retirees. We have done this for many years and they keep coming back for more!

Since our congregation will be welcoming our new minister in January, together with Council and the Worship committee we have decided to have a **New Beginnings Congregational Family Dinner on January 12th**. Heavenly Hospitality will provide the ‘mains’ and each church family will be asked to bring either an appetizer, a salad or a dessert. PLEASE mark your calendars NOW with this date and watch for sign-up sheets in December. We

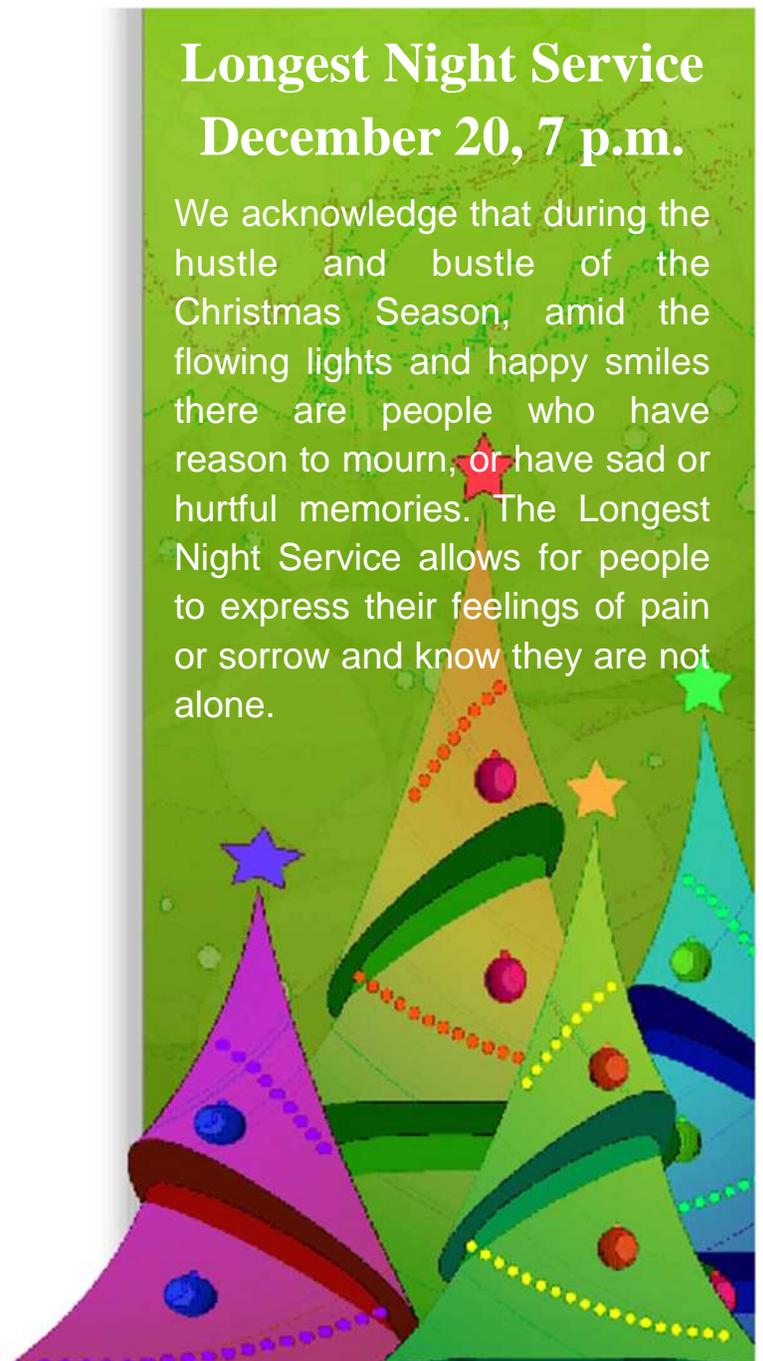
want this to be a very special evening as we begin a new year with new leadership.

We have two new members on our committee – Robin Lane and Sandy Ponich – we welcome you and are so grateful for your help! If anyone else is interested – you don’t have to cook – there is always shopping, prep, clean-up or serving – a job for everyone – so why not join us - Heavenly Hospitality!

Call Lynda Colgan (780 437-2664) or Kathy Poechman (780 463-7750) for more info about this group.

Longest Night Service December 20, 7 p.m.

We acknowledge that during the hustle and bustle of the Christmas Season, amid the flowing lights and happy smiles there are people who have reason to mourn, or have sad or hurtful memories. The Longest Night Service allows for people to express their feelings of pain or sorrow and know they are not alone.





Council members this year have agreed to humor me and participate in this little exercise. Each newsletter is highlighting a Council member and sharing with you their answers to my

20 Questions

Member-at-Large, **Laine Pickle**, in his own words.

Fearing council withdrawal upon completion of my chair rotation, I re-upped for one of the Member-at-Large positions. The intention was to keep an eye on the implementation of our 5-year sustainability plan. Hey, speaking of Member-at-Large positions, the other one has recently been vacated...

1. **If you didn't do what you do for a living, what would you be?**

I am an Engineer. I currently work with a company that distributes specialty bolting products. I enjoy spending evenings and weekends 'burning diesel' on the farm. So, I'm going with Farmer.

2. **Who would play you in the movie of your life story?**

Eddie Albert

3. **What three famous people would you have dinner with?**

Lisa Douglas, Fred & Doris Ziffel

4. **What's your favorite Edmonton landmark?**

I really enjoy the wildlife dioramas at the Royal Alberta Museum

5. **What do you enjoy most about Mill Woods United Church?**

I enjoy the safety of MWUC. I greatly appreciate that Melissa is able to develop a sense of independence by initiating interaction with members of our congregation. I appreciate that she is not only accepted, but also appreciated at MWUC.

6. **What is your favorite hymn?**

Amazing Grace

7. **What's playing in your ipod or cd player right now?**

What the Hell Is Going On? – Paul Thorn's album of covers. (But mostly I'm a FREDHEAD)

8. **If you were marooned on an island, what would be the one item you'd want with you?**

Sir Richard Branson – I don't imagine we would be marooned long (I'm betting that Sir Richard would be considerably more fun than Bill Gates)

9. **Who's your hero?**

Whoever gets us off that island

10. **What's the one gadget you can't live without?**

A pocketknife

11. **What's your favorite restaurant?**

There's this little lunch place in Korea. They serve barbequed eels. I'm not really big on eels, but it was the first cooked food I had had in about three days.

12. **What's your culinary specialty?**

I love to Barbeque. One of the places I most love to fire up a BBQ is the Marmot Basin parking lot. My go to is the Bacon Cheese Burger, but last spring my 'Marmot on a Stick' went over pretty good.

13. **What's your favorite vacation spot?**

Anywhere that I can sit and drink a beer (which may or may not include the parking lot at Marmot Basin)

14. **What's your proudest moment?**

Hey, is this a trick question? Wasn't it pride that got Lucifer into a really bad spot?

15. **What is at the top of your to-do list?**

Make a to-do list?

16. **What is your favorite animal?**

I'm partial to beef cattle, particularly when they find their way onto a BBQ

17. **What is your guilty pleasure?**

Bacon. Can I change my favorite animal? (don't tell Arnold Ziffel)

18. **What is your secret talent?**

It wouldn't be a secret if I told you.

19. **What are your words to live by?**

Desire is half of life; indifference is half of death (that originates with someone much smarter than me)

20. **What is your favorite Mill Woods United Church memory?**

I had a period of bad health a few years back. For a couple of months Dale Irving was visiting me in the hospital quite regularly. I will always remember the look on Dale's face the first Sunday I walked into church after I got out of the hospital. I had not fully comprehended how sick I had been until that moment when I saw Dale's reaction.



is an annual appeal to Edmonton area churches to help provide safe and affordable housing for those who are

homeless or at risk in our city. We have been invited to participate in raising funds for the 2013 campaign.

The appeal is based on the story of Mary and Joseph who arrived in Bethlehem to discover that there was no room in the inn, and who took refuge in a stable until Jesus was born. Too many people today in Edmonton face a similar housing crisis.

This year's Christmas offering will assist the Oxford House Foundation to renovate and modernize their Edmonton houses for men and women recovering from addictions. There are eight Oxford Houses which provide housing for approximately 40, located in neighborhoods across the city.

The houses are fully furnished and include all amenities, however all are older homes beginning to show their age. Renovations and upgrading are very much needed. Supporting this initiative will provide upgrading to kitchens, bathrooms and electrical systems.

To help with this project, please use a donation envelope available at the church. Make your donation payable to Mill Woods United Church and drop into the offering plate on a Sunday or mail it into the office. Be sure to indicate on your cheque memo line "No Room in the Inn".

All donations will be forwarded to the Oxford House Foundation in January. All donations are tax deductible.

An Oxford House offers affordable housing, fellowship and encourages self-reliance and self-respect for individuals in recovery.

www.oxfordhousefoundation.ca





Mill Woods United Church

December 2013

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p><i>1</i> 10:30 am Worship Advent 1 (Rev. Nicholson)</p>	<p><i>2</i></p>	<p><i>3</i> 1:30 pm Prayer <i>Shawl Meeting</i> 5:30-6:30 pm Food/Clothing Bank 7-9 pm Tai Chi</p>	<p><i>4</i> 5:30-7 pm Yoga</p>	<p><i>5</i> 11:30 am Presby- tery Retiree Lunch 5:30-6:30 pm Food/Clothing Bank</p>	<p><i>6</i> OFFICE CLOSED 7:00 pm Recital</p>	<p><i>7</i> 9 am-3 pm SDA</p>
<p><i>8</i> 10:30 am Worship Advent 2 White Gift Sunday (Rev. Nicholson)</p>	<p><i>9</i></p>	<p><i>10</i> 5:30-6:30 pm Food/Clothing Bank 7-9 pm Tai Chi 7 pm Council Mtg</p>	<p><i>11</i></p>	<p><i>12</i> 5:30-6:30 pm Food/Clothing Bank 6:30 pm Recital</p>	<p><i>13</i> OFFICE CLOSED</p>	<p><i>14</i> 9 am-3 pm SDA</p>
<p><i>15</i> 10:30 am Worship Advent 3 (Rev. Nicholson)</p>	<p><i>16</i></p>	<p><i>17</i> 5:30-6:30 pm Food/Clothing Bank 7-9 pm Tai Chi</p>	<p><i>18</i></p>	<p><i>19</i> 5:30-6:30 pm Food/Clothing Bank</p>	<p><i>20</i> OFFICE CLOSED 7:00 pm Longest Night Service (P & L Verdin)</p>	<p><i>21</i> 9 am-1 pm SDA</p>
<p><i>22</i> 10:30 am Worship Advent 4 (Rev. Nicholson)</p>	<p><i>23</i></p>	<p><i>24</i> 7 pm Family Service (P & L Verdin) 10 pm Communion Service (Rev. Nicholson)</p>	<p><i>25</i> OFFICE CLOSED</p>	<p><i>26</i> OFFICE CLOSED</p>	<p><i>27</i> OFFICE CLOSED</p>	<p><i>28</i> 9 am-1 pm SDA</p>
<p><i>29</i> 10:30 am Worship (P & L Verdin)</p>	<p><i>30</i> OFFICE CLOSED</p>	<p><i>31</i> OFFICE CLOSED</p>				

From The United Church of Canada

United Future

From coast to coast to coast, we have begun a conversation about the future of The United Church of Canada. Through the work of the Comprehensive Review Task Group, the church is exploring new ways of being faithful in a rapidly changing time and society.

Add your voice. Visit www.unitedfuture.ca to join and share in conversation offering your hopes, fears, dreams and visions.

“That all might be One?”



I'm sure neither of these ladies suspected they would have a clothing twin at church while they were getting dressed on November 17. And yet, it happened. During the “Greeting One Another” time, Brian Sampson couldn't restrain himself from snapping a pic. Both ladies had a good chuckle too.

So, my question for you,

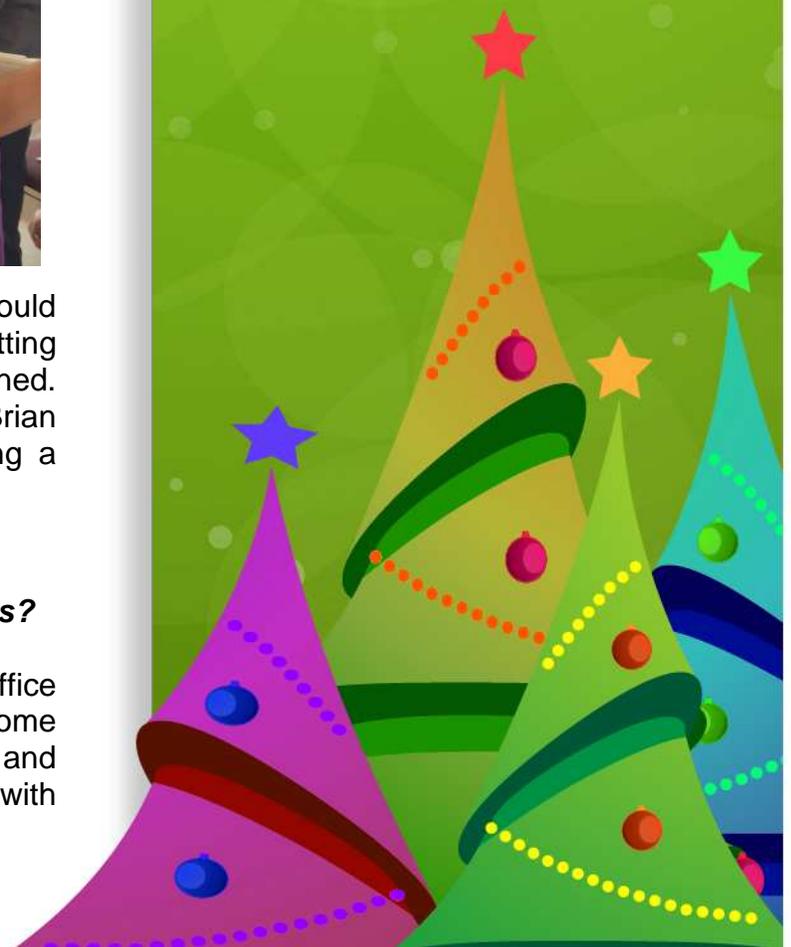
Can you tell me the names of these two ladies?

There is a box on the desk outside the church office marked ***'Connections Contest'*** along with some slips of paper. Fill out a ballot, drop it into the box and on December 15 we will present a lucky winner with a small prize.

Christmas Eve Services

7:00 p.m. - Family Service led
by Paul & Lesley Verdin

10:00 p.m. - Communion
Service led by
Rev. Carolyn Nicholson



Where are they Now?

Well, maybe that isn't quite the right question in this case. A more appropriate question might be "**Where have you been?**" For this young traveler, the adventure began about two years ago when he was accepted into the Rotary Club's Exchange Student program.

On November 17, Francisco Rico Jr., more affectionately known as Kiko, was interviewed by Eric Maertens-Poole and regaled the congregation with stories of his adventures in Turkey. Kiko spent a year (well almost a year) in Turkey - living, going to school and travelling - with a host family. The culture and language in Turkey is quite foreign to us, so it was a big adjustment.

The timing of the interview couldn't have been more perfect. As Lynda Colgan pointed out at the beginning of the service, it had been 10 years ago this November that we welcomed the Rico family (Francisco, Olga, Luis, Juan and Kiko) to Canada, Edmonton and Mill Woods United Church.

Thank you Kiko for sharing your adventure and photographs with us. It was very interesting and will be as you told us - a time in your life you will never forget.



Eric Maertens-Poole interviews Francisco Rico Jr. about his trip to Turkey

Reminder:

Mark your calendars - our new minister, Rev. Ian Kellogg will be leading our service on January 5, 2014. Plan to be here to welcome him. And, then on January 12, plan to attend the '*New Beginnings*' dinner to usher in the new year!