

Christmas Newsletter 2011



A Message from Our Minister



A Christmas Collage: Snapshots of the Sacred

“Sometimes people can walk right through a mystery and not even know it is there.”

(Advent 1, Godly Play)

Each year we gather around these words in worship the first Sunday of Advent. They speak a hard truth about what happens to us both inside and out of the church at this time of year. At its heart, this season is about celebrating and receiving more deeply the profound gift of being alive, each one of us pulsing with divine presence, capable of creating and living into the kind of hope, peace, joy and love that can change our lives and our world. Too often though, thrust into the parties, concerts, shopping and even church events meant to remind us of this gift, we lose sight of what is being given and we miss the mystery.

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This year we have intentionally cut back on some of our traditions in an attempt to slow the pace and remain more open to mystery and blessing. There will not be an evening Christmas concert. Instead, on December 18th our morning worship will include offerings from all of our choirs directed by our music team of Dominique Hogan, Pandora Furniss, Mary Sparks and Marcus Mosely. There will also not be a big production Christmas pageant as in years past. In lieu, the 7pm Christmas Eve service will include opportunities for adults and children who wish to participate in simple ways. Finally, after careful consideration, we will not be offering a late evening Christmas

Mount Seymour United Church

Inclusive, Inquisitive, Involved

1200 Parkgate Ave., North Vancouver, BC
(604)929-1336 www.mtseymourunited.com



Eve service. Knowing that many other churches offer these services, our hope is that those for whom this tradition is important will be warmly received in those communities.

Our overall Advent theme is meant to help us keep our eyes open and souls tuned to what is freely given in life. It's meant to remind us of the meaning the stories of Jesus' birth held for the early church and the relevance they still hold for us today. Each week we will be invited to notice the hope, peace, joy and love that is already in our world and to hold our lives open for new life we may not even yet have imagined. With this intention, when we encounter the mystery of Christmas, we will not only know that it is there, we will receive and experience it.

Blessings of the Season,
Rev. Nancy Talbot

Christmas Season at MSUC

Sunday Services @ 10 am
with Children's programming and nursery care

Events

Nov. 26	9:30 am	Advent Spiritual Retreat
Nov. 27	after worship	All Ages Advent Event
Dec. 3	8 pm	Universal Gospel Choir Concert
Dec. 4	2:30 pm	North Shore Chorus Concert
Dec. 10	11 am	Turkey Lunch & Bake Sale

December Services

Dec. 4	10 am	Visions of Peace with Communion
Dec. 11	10 am	Glimpses of Joy - Brass Quintet
Dec. 18	10 am	Unimaginable Love - Gospel Choir
Dec 21	7 pm	Blue Christmas Service
Dec. 24	4 pm	Service for young children
	7 pm	All Ages with Candlelight
Dec. 25	10 am	Christmas Day Service





ALL AGES ADVENT EVENT – NOVEMBER 27 AFTER WORSHIP
 Join us for a lunch and wreath making party to mark the beginning of Advent. Sign up at the Action Table or email the office (kclinton@telus.net).

The cost for lunch and the wreath is \$20 per family/\$10 per individual paid the day of the event. *(If you have your green advent wreath base from last year, please write your name on it for re-use and bring it to the office for a reduced cost.)*

SPIRITUAL RETREAT

SAT., NOV. 26 FROM 9:30 AM TO 1 P.M.

Join Rev. Nancy as she leads a 1/2 day retreat to prepare your soul for the season of Advent. The theme of the retreat is based on our advent theme "A Christmas Collage - Snapshots of the Sacred". It will be a time to spiritually prepare for Christmas. Sign up at the Action Table or email the office. The cost is \$20, includes lunch and can be paid the day of the event.

**Snapshots of the Sacred
 from the Community**

Take part in helping us all to *see* the sacred in the everyday. You are invited to take pictures (and encourage your children to take pictures!) of places where you see Hope, Peace, Joy and Love, then email your photos into the office mtsuc@telus.net or drop them off by 12 pm on the Friday before the corresponding Advent Sunday:



Advent One	Nov. 27	Hope
Advent Two	Dec. 4	Peace
Advent Three	Dec. 11	Joy
Advent Four	Dec. 18	Love

**BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE
 Wed., Dec. 21st at 7 pm**



Rev. Nancy, along with music by Dominique Hogan and soloist Marcus Mosley, will offer a service for those for whom Christmas is not an easy time. If you are grieving the loss of a loved one, struggling with an illness of the body, mind or spirit, overwhelmed with the pain and suffering of our world, or simply finding it difficult to cope with the season, this service is for you. If this is not your personal need, you might consider whom you might accompany or invite to attend. The service will be a gentle time of singing, ritual and prayer with ample time to hold before God those people, places and concerns that weigh heavily on our hearts. Please join us for what will surely be a time of rich blessing.

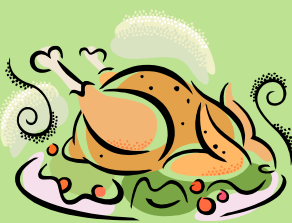
Be Involved in Telling the Christmas Story!

There are tons of creative ways you can participate in telling the Christmas Story in our Advent and Christmas Eve services this year - through music, drama, scripture reading, prayers, poetry, background assistance, playing instruments and more! Email bethel.myseymour@gmail.com to find out how you can share your gifts this season.



"and I suppose you'll be working again this Christmas?"

The Nearly Legendary Men's Turkey Lunch and Bake Sale Dec. 10 ~ 11am -1 pm



Don't miss this lunch cooked and served by the men in our congregation. Bring your friends and family! Contact Alan Furniss (604-929-4585) if you can help with the lunch and/or cook a turkey.

Donations of home baking and preserves are needed. You can sign up at the Action Table or email the office to donate baking. They can be dropped off at the kitchen on Friday, Dec. 9 from 9 am – 7 pm. Contact Doreen at (604)929-5361 to help.

TWECS (Third World Eye Care Society) Chinandega, Nicaragua- Nov. 2011



This woman is a seamstress but was unable to see well enough to thread a needle and had to stop working. With a new pair of glasses provided by TWECS on the first day of their mission she is now able to support her family.

From November 19-28th a team of 26 eye doctors (including Kathy McKay from our congregation), opticians and general volunteers paid their own airfare and accommodations to travel to Nicaragua and provide free eye care and eye glasses to thousands of underprivileged people. During the last year, the team has been busy collecting, washing, sorting measuring and packing the 9000 pairs of eyeglasses to bring on the trip.

Thanks to everyone in our congregation who supported the project by donating glasses and/or donating money. You can follow their trip at www.twecs.ca.

Children & Youth Christmas FUNDRAISERS for TWECS



Change for Change

Start collecting your spare change today and bring your change jar to the church on Advent 4, **December 18**, to offer your 'change for change' during the service. Get the whole family involved!



Bake Sale - Sun., Nov. 27

The Children & Youth will host this sale. We need your help! Email bethel.mtseymour@gmail.com **before Sunday** if you can bring some baked goods to be sold!

The Giving Tree



During Advent our Giving Tree will be in the sanctuary and will be used to receive donations of towels, socks, underwear,

gloves, razors, shaving supplies, soap, toothbrushes, toothpaste and shampoo. We will deliver these to First United Church and Lookout Shelter on the North Shore. Look for the tree on Nov. 27th!

Seymour Access Bus

Connecting Our Seniors to Their Community



Thanks to church members that supported "The Something's Happening Here" campaign in 2008, we were able to set aside \$45,000 for an outreach project east of the Seymour River. The Outreach Team researched the needs of this community and sought out partners to work with on the project. They found an excellent partner in Parkgate Community Services Society along with a dedicated staff to work with there.

Research of the area determined that some frail, elderly seniors at home were isolated, at risk and in need of service. After about a year, our weekly bus service, that picks up seniors at home and assists them with shopping at Lynn Valley Mall, is about 3/4 of capacity. We are still looking for participants and have found that word of mouth is the most helpful way to make contact.

Volunteers are needed on Fridays for about 3 hours to assist the seniors on their outing. Contact Jennifer Dibnah at (604)983-6354 for more information.

[Click here for a poster about the bus service](#) on our website

Thanks to the Outreach Team for getting this valuable project up and running!

What shall MSUC become? By Meg Clarke



Guided by gentle questioning, Chris Corrigan has been hired by MSUC for one year to assume the role of the “blessed listener” and engage our community in an exploration of possibilities.

This is not the traditional strategic planning model - though we anticipate concrete outcomes.

This work is not based on the assumption that the future destination can be blueprinted, and then we try to convince our community to agree. Our future cannot be negotiated, mandated, or controlled into existence.

All of us want to create a future we believe in and take action to make it happen. Chris is guiding us to understand that the nature of the questions we ask will either keep the existing systems in place or bring an alternative future to our Church. It's evolutionary: our shifts in thinking will produce shifts in our practices.

Speaking personally, it reminds me of yoga that creates harmonious spaces in our bodies. Chris's approach is creating harmonious spaces in our thinking - it's a spiritual yoga. After a session with Chris, one feels hopeful, uplifted, wanting to do more.

OK: for all of us “get the job done” types, here is what we have done so far.

1. We identified 3 overall goals for MSUC:
 - create a place to nourish our souls
 - create a Church that is an asset to our community with sustainable uses of our building and land
 - connect those 2 goals
2. Then, we worked in teams to identify specific ideas in each of those 3 areas.

For example, I was part of a group with Mark Coulombe who led a discussion of the meaning of a spiritual community and how can we expand our spiritual reach.

Others focused on the building and land: Should we create community gardens? Should we construct a dedicated space for the Thrift Shop? What about opening a Wonder Cafe?

Others discussed partnerships and identified a number of potential community partners.

Each of the groups is now producing more detailed recommendations for discussion at an all-day session on **JANUARY 28, 2012**. Email Kathryn (kclinton@telus.net) if you are interested in attending.

A final comment: Chris's guidance is inspiring. Plan to join us January 28 to help shape the future of MSUC.
(PS: Dissent is welcomed!)



Chris Corrigan is a process artist, a teacher and a facilitator of social technologies for face to face conversation in the service of emergence. His business is supporting invitation: the invitation to collaborate, to organize, to find one another and make a difference in our communities, organizations and lives. You can find our more at www.chriscorrigan.com

A Report from Our Treasurer

This year the congregation approved an operating budget of \$330,000 for the year ending December 31. I am happy to report that after 10 months, our total revenue from all sources is slightly ahead of our targets and our expenses are less than our budget leaving us in a surplus of approximately \$30,000 for the year.

The new campaign launched this year has been successful in increasing regular givings. Our target for regular givings for the year is \$180,000 in order to fund our existing level of programs and this should be achieved thanks to the generous response of the congregation to *the Something's Still Happening Here* campaign.

Doug Querns

Please contact Fay Butterfield at (604)929-1991 or fbutterfield@shaw.ca if you would like to receive a tax receipt for your givings. She can arrange for you to have envelopes or to set up PAR (monthly pre-authorized remittance from your bank account).



This Christmas help First United be a warm and safe refuge for the homeless. First helps over 700 people each day in Vancouver's downtown eastside. Donation envelopes are on the Action Table or go to www.firstunited.ca



Living the Questions2 Fall 2011

A Reflection by Anne Ellis

Mulled apple cider. Have you ever made it? It's a simple enough recipe. Take some ordinary apple juice, add some aromatic and delectable spices like cinnamon and cloves, apply heat and just let it simmer away.

After an hour or two the ordinary apple juice is transformed into something extraordinary. The flavours are rich and diverse. Just a sip and you feel like you're tasting heaven.

That's what 'The Living the Question' series has been like for me. For six weeks a group of us met, just some ordinary apples seeking and wondering. We added some spices; questions about the nature of Christ, redemptive violence, evil and resurrection. We applied heat to thinking about the bible critically, but not literally and then we just let it all simmer.

Occasionally the pot boiled over. Concepts and ideas, at times, were unfathomable and even overwhelming. But we all continued simmering and stirring. We were in a safe place, a comfortable place where we could express openly what we've known intuitively all along, but perhaps never had permission to express. There is an immense freedom in being able to do that and I believe we all felt closer to each other and the Divine as a result.

I feel blessed and honoured to have shared those hours with everyone. The stories, the personal accounts and the willingness to be open and honest with each other moved me deeply.

In exploring 'The Living the Questions' series, I came to understand the concept of Jesus living a Fully Human life thus becoming Fully Divine. If we could all follow that example; live Fully, love wastefully, forgive without judgement how different this world would be. In the end it felt as if we barely scratched the surface of where these questions and conversations could have led us. I don't think any of us are truly ready for the series to be finished.

We were ordinary apples six weeks ago. But with some spice, some heat and a lot of simmering we've become something amazing. I look forward to cooking up some more conversations with everyone in the future.



Spiced Apple Cider Recipe (from Canadianliving.com)

Ingredients

1 tbsp (15 mL) grated orange rind
4 whole cloves
2 pieces cinnamon, (1 inch/2.5 cm)
3 cups (750 mL) apple cider or apple juice
Granulated sugar, (optional)

Preparation

In small square of double-thickness fine cheesecloth, tie up orange rind, cloves and cinnamon pieces; place in saucepan. Add apple cider; cover and heat over medium heat just until boiling. Remove from heat; let stand, covered, for 5 minutes. Discard bag; stir in sugar to taste (if using).

Caring Connections Workshop



by Sherrill McLeary

On Saturday, Nov. 4, The Caring Connections Team welcomed Dale Johnson, a United Church Minister and retired VGH Chaplin, and 17 church community members for a morning of learning, sharing and refreshment.

Dale informed us that the primary task when visiting someone is to "be with" the person using skills such as listening from the heart journeying with that person accepting, in a genuine manner, where they are at that moment physically and emotionally. Dale encouraged us to respond with respect and sensitivity choosing our words carefully and reminding who we are visiting that they are not alone, we live in God's world.

We discussed when visiting whether to: a) pray or not to pray, touch or not to touch and b) how can we be helpful when we ourselves feel helpless in a situation.

Dale closed the workshop reminding us of the song/hymn "Take, take off your shoes, you're walking on holy ground" - to enter our visit with reverence knowing that divine presence is with us. Caring Connections future "dream" is to be trained to offer home communion to those not able to attend church.

Please let us know if you would like to visit or if you know of someone who would benefit from a phone call, card, or visit from us.

Sherrill McLeary for the Caring Connections Team
samcleary@shaw.ca or (604) 924-3356

COMING IN JANUARY:

Life Groups: *Questions that Matter; People that Care*

In January we are launching an exciting initiative with the intention of building stronger relationships between congregational members and providing an opportunity for people to explore questions of faith. Life Groups will meet once a month from January to June in the homes of four group leaders (see below). Each gathering will consist of time for getting to know each other; conversation about a question of faith and closing prayer. Topics will include: 1) Why come to church? 2) Does faith make a difference in my life? 3) Is the Resurrection Real? 4) Does Prayer work? 5) Does God have a Plan for my Life?

Participants will sign up for one of four possible meeting times:

- 1) Saturday mornings at 9:30 am beginning on January 21
- 2) Tuesday evenings at 7pm beginning on January 24
- 3) Wednesday mornings at 10 am beginning on January 25 and
- 4) Thursday evenings at 7pm beginning on January 26

To register: Email Kathryn in the office (kclinton@telus.net) indicating your first and second time choice or fill out a registration form at the Action Table and drop it in the locked box outside the office.

Meet the Life Group Leaders



Wendy Alexander is an Architectural Designer who also works with school aged children in SD 44. Her passions include creating works of art that reflect the worship season, reading, dancing, singing in the Gospel Choir and spending time with her 4 adult children - when they are in town!



Anne Ellis

One of Anne's favourite things is to hear about people's relationship to their faith. She enjoys exploring different faith traditions and spiritual practices. She is also interested in early church history, the Gnostic Gospels & mystic writers, like Hildegard of Bingen.



David Ney has been a member of the congregation for a couple of years, has made a recent hobby out of theological studies, along with a lifelong appreciation for cooking and gardening. He loves spending time with his daughter Kate, especially on the ski slopes. or a road trip....



Mike Hetherington

grew up attending a United Church in Vancouver and has been at Mt Seymour for the last 20 years. He has an interest in contemplative prayer and other spiritual practices. See also www.michaelheterington.ca.



Jessica and Anthony

The Nursery is Up and Running

Due to popular demand, the Sunday morning nursery is up and running again. The space is lovingly led by Jessica Horton who is a certified Medical Assistant with plans to become a Registered Nurse in Pediatrics and a dedicated mother of her 4-year-old son Anthony. You are welcome to bring your child to the nursery when the children are invited to their programs following the Children's hymn.

A Note from Jessica Horton Our Nursery Care Provider

"I am so grateful to have found Mt Seymour United, as we have been searching for a church with similar values that we believe are important in bringing the community together, sharing similar principles in our daily lives and having a strong faith in a higher being. We were attracted to Mt Seymour United instantly and feel a strong sense of "family" here, which is very beneficial for my son and me, as we do not have much family on the North Shore. I value the task of building community involvement, and I strongly believe that "It takes a village to raise a child." Thank you for welcoming us with open arms into Mount Seymour United! I look forward to meeting and working with all of the amazing and inspiring children at our church!"

OT

Meet Nicolas



Nicolas is a Vancouver School of Theology (VST) student who will be doing a field education placement at MSUC from Jan.-March 2012.

Nicolas Alexandre (Nic) originally hails from the east coast having been raised in Massachusetts. Born to an Acadian family who came down from northern New Brunswick (*Péninsule Acadienne*) to seek work, his family has been in Canada since 1648 when the “first” Nicolas came to Cape Breton and settled having been a Huguenot who was avoiding much of the growing religious tensions in Southern France at the time. New to Vancouver he spent the past year in Kamloops interning at a parish in the north shore.

Nic is passionate about religion, preaching, practical and pastoral theology and mysticism. Having earned his undergraduate degrees in Religious and Classical Studies from the University of Southern Maine, he also holds a Master’s in Divinity with a concentration in Pastoral Theology. Currently, he is a student at Vancouver School of Theology pursuing an advanced degree (Th. M.) in theology with a focus on the emergent Christianity of the Jewish communities in the 1st to 6th centuries with a particular concentration on the Gospel of John.

Realizing that man does not live by academics alone, Nic was drawn to finding a community to work with and is overjoyed that the opportunity presented itself to come to Mount Seymour. He gives thanks to the Spirit of community and looks forward to sharing in the communal walk together towards God’s aspirations.

Sharing our space!

Starting in January 2012 we are pleased to announce that two additional faith communities will share our building on Sunday afternoons.



The Cove: Let Us Make Introduction

“Stumbling towards Christ together” sums up the nine-year journey of The Cove. The Cove has been a place of spiritual renewal and recovery for many people. Deeply committed to becoming a community of inclusion and justice, Cove has embarked upon a fearless journey to discover the transforming power of the spirituality Jesus lived. Our story comes out of the evangelical tradition, but we are a community becoming a new expression of what comes after evangelicalism. We are an inclusive, justice, grace orientated community. A team of people planted this church based around a set of values we believe reflect the living of Jesus as it would be expressed in our culture and world today.

The lead pastor of The Cove is Sean Graham, often described as “just a guy, looking for new life in people, wherever it may be hiding”. Sean’s ministry is known for releasing the “Springs of Living Water” that dwells within each of us. For Sean, it’s not about having the right answers - it’s all about asking the right questions that leads us to better questions.



Sean is passionate about abundant life and discovering it through living simply, grace and forgiveness. Sean lives in Deep Cove with his wife, BJ, and two beautiful children, Claire (13) and Thomas (11) and a dog named Joe.



St. Clare-in-the-Cove Anglican Church

It is a time of mixed emotions, sadness for the ending of our wonderful years at the little blue church mingled with excitement for the possibilities of the future.

We will meet at MSUC to worship and share a meal together on the second and fourth Sundays of the month at 4:30 pm starting in January.

Mount Seymour members are long time worship & community partners and Cove Community Church will become new partners as we begin to share the space together.

Jane Osborne, St. Clare Member

Deep Cove Coffee House

January 20, 2012, 7:30PM

Admission: \$10 (includes fantastic coffee & home-baked goodies)

Along for the Ride



Gary Manzer - guitar, Linda Manzer - upright bass, Ken Hatch - lead guitar & trumpet, Helen Hansen - vocals, Kathy Francis - clarinet

Doors open: 7:00pm

Open Stage: 7:30pm

Feature: 9:00pm

Refreshment Break: 8:30

Mount Seymour United Church

1200 Parkgate

E-mail: jane@nsrj.ca

Phone: (604) 363-5370

The Deep Cove Coffee House is moving to MSUC in Jan. 2012. Concerts are generally the third Friday of the month. Contact Jane(604)363-5370 if you can help at the concerts or provide some home baking. See the Coffee House page on [our website](#) for future concerts.

New Yoga Series for the New Year:



The New Year is the perfect time to open and awaken your soul, body and mind. Bethel Lee, our Children & Family Minister and a certified Yoga Instructor, will be leading a Yoga Series that blends the Story of Creation with movement and breath. Check out her **Yoga Church video** featured on a United Church website profiling leading edge ministries across Canada: <http://www.edge-ucc.ca/launch/launch-videos/>

Email bethel.mtseymour@gmail.com to stay informed!

The Children & Youth need your support!

Please volunteer to help lead or assist our Sunday morning programs. Whether you're a youth, young adult, parent or senior you have incredible gifts to offer that will help nourish the spiritual exploration of our children. Contact Bethel at [\(778\) 887-1036](tel:7788871036) or <mailto:bethel.mtseymour@gmail.com>



Peace, Hope, Love & Joy with the Al-Azaizeh Newcomers

On April 27, the Al family arrived in Vancouver from the Al Hol refugee camp in Syria after spending 4 years there. MSUC along with 7 other North Shore Churches sponsor this family. One of the best things the Refugee Team did to help them settle was to register the children, Qods and Ali, in The Edmonds Community School in Burnaby. Now Senaa and Enam have daily English Language lessons there and last week Omar had his first dental check up through their Strong Start Program. See the article in The Vancouver Sun on Nov. 18 about the school & Principal, David Starr on our bulletin board or [click here](#).

We, the sponsors look forward to sharing with them their first Canadian Christmas. They are our Muslim friends who honour Jesus as an important prophet and enjoy learning about Canada and our lives as they share theirs with us. See more photos on <http://gallery.me.com/larsanne/100046>
Submitted by Jen-Beth Fulton, Refugee Team



"The world is made up of stories, not atoms."

~Muriel Ruykeyser