



Bala United Church

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Issue 58

Newsletter December, 2011

Celebrating the life and work of our Church

Rev. Sue Woods, Minister



Minister's Chat

What a magical time of the year! In amongst the decorating, the wrapping, the parties, the visitors, the baking, the eating, are moments in time that could almost stand still -- moments of believing in something that at one time seemed so far fetched and hard to ever imagine.

In amongst your Christmas decorations do you have a nativity scene? The nativity scene is one of the most familiar images of Christmas. At one time some aspect of that scene was the most common icon to find on a Christmas card, and of course every school play or Sunday school concert had its moment when three or four shepherds dressed in bath robes, some wise ones with foil crowns, and a few children dressed up as sheep, and donkeys, and cows would gather around a young Mary and Joseph. They gazed at a little bundle lying on a small pile of straw in a miniature manger. Oh, the wonder of believing.

It is as if the nativity scene, the crèche, communicates a little bit of what God is all about and that, somehow, those who look upon a reproduction of that scene, whether it be as a play or a set of figurines

placed carefully on a shelf or a table, understand the Christian message more completely than they do at any other time of year. "To believe."

On Christmas Day a small manger scene sat on a table just inside the doorway to a neatly kept home. People hurried past it all day, barely noticing the tiny figures gathered around the infant tucked in the straw. In the morning, children raced by it on their way to the Christmas tree. At noon, arriving guests pushed past it, one accidentally knocking over a shepherd as the guest took off his winter coat.

Later in the afternoon a well-fed assembly of adults and children moved somewhat slowly by the manger again as they drifted from the dining room back to the living room. Almost none of them stopped to look at the manger. In fact, none of them even noticed it, except two. An elderly woman, walking with a cane, paused in front of the scene. Gently she set the shepherd back in an upright position. Then she looked at the Christ child in the middle of all the figures. As she stood there, she became aware of her small grandson standing by her side. As the voices drifted in from the living room, the two continued to look at the manger scene. At length a smile spread across the woman's face. The child took her hand. In the midst of a day filled with much activity, the two of them quietly received God's gift -- the gift of faith.

May the peace and the hope and the wonder of the nativity be yours this truly magical time of the year.

Blessings, Rev Sue

Notes from Council

Moving Council meetings to the evening has already paid wonderful dividends. Council welcomed Jo-Anne Baird, Judy Racz, Mike Racz, and Lexanne Wheaton to the table at our last meeting. Indeed, Lexanne has chosen to sit on Council as a full Member! That's really good news.

At the same meeting the Chair reported that he has opened dialogue with Councillors, Brad Burgess and Bob McTavish, and with Karen McGhee, Project Manager for Swift River, re possible development of a hydroelectric generating station, Option One, closer to our Church. Conversations have included concerns around staging of the project, the use of the MNR lands adjacent to our Church, blasting, parking, and other short and long term possible impacts of the proposed project.

Earlier this month, the Pastoral Oversight Visit took place and went very well. At Port Carling United, on November 14, three members of the Living Waters Presbytery met Rev Sue, the Ministry and Personnel Committee, and both Councils and other interested Members. The exchange of information was both very helpful and reaffirming of the achievements of both Churches. Councils look forward to a written report that will follow this initiative.

Credit goes to Beth Croft and Ian Croft who selected an outstanding film, *The Great Debaters*, for the recent movie night. About 35 movie goers attended! Bill Niess barbequed hot dogs while Barb Bond, Bob Bond, Beth Croft, Ian Croft, and Marilyn Niess assisted in the kitchen with popcorn and other delicacies. Thanks go to Rev Sue and Lou Woods for bringing the projector and providing a sound system.

Christmas preparations already include the refurbishing of a Christmas Nativity Scene contributed by Don Graham on behalf of his late wife, Karen. Two little elves have been seen carefully painting Madonna, the baby Jesus, and Joseph. Apparently Home Building Centre Gravenhurst, Muskoka Lumber Bala, and Weismiller Lumber have contributed paint for the "freshening up" of these wonderful icons. We

look forward to their display on the lawn of the Church. Mavis Legris, Cecilia Colwell, Dick Colwell, Betty Ann Jerrett and Anne Snowdon have decorated the sanctuary wonderfully while Bill and Marilyn Niess have set a festive tree in the Jackson C. E. Wing.

Basement renewal in the Jackson C. E. Wing goes forward well. About two weeks ago a large crew of volunteers, over two days, emptied out the basement, removed perimeter (interior) walls, and generally prepared the work place for construction to go forward. Thanks go to John Baird, Don Elliott, Marjorie Elliott, Peter Hemming, Gary Jerrett, Bill Niess and Howard Ruttan for their spirited contributions. Perimeter walls are complete and, at the time of writing, Rev Sue's new office and one storage area have been framed. Kudos go to Bob Bond, Peter Hemming, and Howard Ruttan who drive the framing. Gary Jerrett, member and licensed electrician, has removed radiators, re-routed or removed existing wiring, and installed appropriate lighting and a heater for the work place. Gary has also provided his pick-up and trailer to assist removing debris to the Landfill—four trips in all. Windows arrive next week from Muskoka Windows and Doors. Following a first inspection from the Township, plumbing and electrical can then go forward.

It is with great gratitude that Council recognizes the generous contributions of members of our Church and from Evelyn McAdam's family and friends who have supported the basement renewal project.

Respectfully submitted, Brian McDonald

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Schedule of Christmas Services

Sunday, December 4, 2011 White Gift Service. Gifts of food items wrapped in white tissue paper or money will be received and following the service be given to the OPP West

Muskoka Ministerial Christmas Food Drive for families in the area.

Sunday, December 11, 2011 Christmas Communion service at 11:00 am

Saturday, December 24, 2010
5:00 pm **Family Christmas Eve Service**
at Bala United Church

Sunday, December 25, 2011
One service for both churches at 10:30 am at Bala United Church

Sunday, January 1, 2012
One service for both churches at 10:30 am at Port Carling United Church

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ANNOUNCEMENTS:



It is with regret that we accept Leo Couture's resignation from his position as Treasurer for Bala Port Carling Pastoral Charge effective December 31, 2011. If you are willing to assume these duties, please contact Leo at 705-687-2627 for further information.

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Ice Luminaries

On Christmas Eve the pathway into the church will be lined with candle/ice luminaries. They will be lit "in memory" and "in honour" of people who have special places in our hearts.

If you would like us to light luminaries on your behalf, please send \$10 for each to Bala United Church Women, at P O Box 313, Bala ON POC 1A0 or give the money directly to Marilyn Niess, Marian McDonald or Barb Bond.

Upcoming Events:

Saturday, December 3, 2011

Trek to Bethlehem

Bala Community Centre

Guided tours start at 6 pm

If you can contribute a loaf of sandwiches to support the cast during the Trek, please call Marian at 705-762-5178.

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**The Women of
BALA UNITED CHURCH
INVITE**

all of the Women in the Bala Community
to join them for a
Christmas Potluck Dinner & Silent Auction
on

Monday, December 5, 2011

At Bala Community Centre

Appetizers/Wine 6:00 pm

Dinner 7:00 pm

Please bring a favourite prepared dish that we can share on the buffet table, Proceeds from the silent auction will be given to the OPP West Muskoka Ministerial Christmas Food Drive.

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Thursday, December 8, 2011

7:30 pm

Port Carling Community Centre

West Muskoka Ministerial will host an evening of Christmas music, "Down from His Glory," the Love Story of Christmas led by The Advent Choir. A Free will offering will be taken for the Muskoka Chaplaincy. Please bring a non perishable item for the Food Drive.

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December 9, 2011

9:00 am

**OPP West Muskoka Ministerial
Food Drive**

First Congregational Church. Please bring in nonperishable items to that church.

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Tuesday, December 13, 2011

6:00 pm

Bala United Church



All members of the congregation are invited to join Council members for **A Christmas party** in the JCE Wing at 6:00 pm. If you are able to bring a dessert or Christmas baking, it would be greatly appreciated!

We need you to RSVP so that we can provide sufficient food for everyone. Please RSVP to Marilyn at 705-762-2870 or Marian at 705-762-5178.

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In Loving Memory of
Evelyn Amelia McAdam

September 6, 1914 - October 29, 2011

Wife of the late Walter McAdam, Mother of Robert, David, Jane, Judy and Marnie, Gramma and "GG" to 17 great grandchildren



**The
Great
Debaters**

The Movie, "The Great Debaters," was enjoyed by 32 members of the community on November 19, 2011, in the J.C.E. Wing. The purpose of the event was to welcome the community into our church for shared entertainment. At the conclusion of the event all agreed we had fulfilled that purpose.

The movie was very well chosen, incredibly powerful, and enjoyed by all. Thank you, Bill Niess, for standing in the rain and barbecuing the hotdogs. Beth Croft, thank you for choosing an excellent movie and for providing the "gluten free" foods and the great candy. Rev Sue and Beth -- great popcorn! We love your whirly-poppers.

Ian Croft, thank you for undertaking the sales desk, and Bob, Marilyn, and Barb, thank you for your kitchen help and support.

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Knitting Group

Every **Monday** 10 am – 12 noon
Jackson C.E. Wing – Everyone is welcome.
Coffee is served.

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A Message from the Ladies in the Gift Shop.

We would like to thank all those who have helped to make this year 2011, a successful and rewarding year to date.

During Cranberry Festival we had sales of \$850.00. We participated in the Santa Claus Parade and had sales after the event.

On November 26, 2011, we will have a table at the Christmas event held at the Legion in Bala.

Our donations this year are as follows:

Cleaning of the church	\$ 500.00
Basement Renovation	1,000.00
Womens' Shelter	150.00
Salvation Army	200.00
World Vision	400.00
Food Vouchers	500.00
Canadian Cancer Society	50.00
Habitat garbage Receptical	28.25
Flowers for the Dr. George Woodward garden	100.00

We are proud of our endeavours with the knitting donations and sales. We hope to make 2012 even more successful.

Yours truly, Cecelia Colwell

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At the Budget Meeting on November 10, 2011, the following budget allocations were made:

Bala United Church	\$1,500.00
Kitchen	100.00
Mission and Service	250.00
Gifts for Shut-Ins	75.00
Hospice Muskoka	100.00
Basement Renewal	1,000.00
Trek to Bethlehem	50.00
Carpet cleaning	300.00
Church cleaning	1,000.00

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And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the new year: *Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.*

And he replied: *Go out into the darkness and put your hand in the hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way.*

M Haskins



To contact Rev. Sue
Home Office: 705-645-9266
Port Carling United - 705-765-5596
Bala United Church - 705-762-0116
(There are answering machines at all three numbers; please leave a message.)
email address: revsue@bell.net
Note: Monday is Rev Sue's day off.